



THE INDEPENDENT

ON SATURDAY

Saturday 25 October 1997

(IR65p) 70p No 3,437

A foetus's pain exposes raw nerves in the battle over abortion



An image of a 24-week-old foetus from the book *A Child is Born* by photographer Lennart Nilsson

Aborted babies may be able to feel pain. The announcement by gynaecologists comes just days before the 30th anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act. Glenda Cooper, Social Affairs Correspondent, on the continuing controversy over whether foetuses suffer.

A bitter feud between pro- and anti-abortion campaigners was revived yesterday after a report by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists said that a foetus may be able to feel pain from 26 weeks.

The college yesterday dis-

closed scientific evidence that the development of the nervous system, which might enable a foetus to feel pain, begins at around the 26th week of gestation. It was the first time the Royal College has issued guidelines on pain during abortions, stressing that the foetus should be protected from any potential painful or harmful procedures.

Foetal pain is the critical point of argument between pro-life and pro-choice campaigners. Pro-lifers claim that the foetus can feel pain much earlier, while the pro-choice lobby says there is already no possibility of it feeling pain because of the way late terminations are carried out.

The pro-choice lobbyists say that the cortex – the upper part of the brain – does not devel-

op fully until 26 weeks and is essential for pain sensations.

But the pro-lifers argue that the cortex is responsible for a "great deal less than people imagine", and that the thalamus, part of the brain's primitive brain structures, could play a vital part in experiencing pain. Last year a report supported by the Parliamentary Pro-Life group said that a foetus may feel pain by the 10th week of life.

The college's study was carried out by a working party of medical experts, scientists, lay people, a theologian and a lawyer. It advises doctors to consider using an anaesthetic for unborn babies when carrying out a termination at or after 24 weeks – to allow any discrepancy as to the exact age of the child.

Very few abortions take

place after 24 weeks, the normal legal limit for terminations, and if they do they are usually because of severe foetal abnormality such as heart defects. Of the 177,225 abortions carried out last year, 653 were performed at 23 or 24 weeks and 92 at 25 weeks or over.

Professor Anne McLaren, who chaired the working group, said it had "looked at the scientific evidence and found that before 26 weeks there was no awareness of pain".

"This should reassure the overwhelming minority of women who have a termination at this late stage that there is no possibility of the foetus feeling pain," she added. "What we are saying to doctors is that after 24 weeks they should consider giving some sort of

analgesia. We don't know what the effect of an analgesia would be on the child and it is difficult to find out. One of our recommendations is that more research is done on intervention with or without analgesia."

Pro-life campaigners said that the acceptance a foetus could suffer pain was a step in the right direction but that it did not go far enough. Jack Scarbrick, of the pro-life charity Life who sat on Lord Rawlinson's commission into abortion issues, described the report as "simply a way of anesthetising the consciences of doctors and the whole of society".

"There is a gradual slope up to pain, so if we are to try and avoid pain we should anaesthetise much earlier than 25 weeks. If our object is to avoid

pain, then maybe [we should do it] 10 weeks earlier," he added.

The director of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC), John Smeaton said: "Although we welcome any acceptance of the humanity of the unborn child, the fact that a foetus is a sentient being shows that rather than giving anaesthetics we should not have abortion at all."

But Ann Furedi, director of the pro-choice charity the Birth Control Trust, said there was already no possibility of a foetus feeling pain because of the way terminations are carried out.

She said: "In abortions at and after 20 weeks, the foetal heart is always stopped prior to the abortion so there is already no possibility that the foetus could suffer."

Name, address, number – all on Big Brother's CD

An innocuous-looking CD-Rom will next week mark an uncomfortable watershed in the information age in Britain. A £170 electronic UK phone directory from an American company will hold 42 million names, addresses and phone numbers – searchable by telephone number, street name and town to yield details you may have wanted to keep private.

The Boston company, i-CD Publishing, insists that it will enrich peoples' lives, by saving them money on directory enquiries calls – which earn BT £125m annually, while business will get a "better deal for the customers". It expects to sell four million copies in the UK over the next 12 months.

However, BT and the Data Protection Registrar are deeply unhappy about the implications of such "reverse search" facility in a phone directory. In the US, where reverse searching has been available for about five years, people regularly complain that calls are interrupted by unwanted phone calls from marketing companies.

But other aspects to the facility may be unwelcome too. Phil Jones, an assistant data protection registrar, said: "It's unfair to telephone customers to introduce this, because it alters their control of private information they have given out in the past. If you put your phone number in an advert selling your car, do you want every motor dealer in the area turning up on

your doorstep uninvited?" At i-CD, the UK sales manager, Alastair Crawford, said yesterday that such a disc, which has been compiled from electoral roll data and many companies' telephone number data, is an inevitable outcome of the information revolution. "We're like a motorway – we get people together. We can't predict or control what will happen when they do," he said.

Selling the CD-ROM in Britain does not break any UK data protection laws, because the actual database was compiled abroad, Mr Jones said.

BT said last night that it will investigate the disc to see whether it breaks its copyright. Over the years, BT has strenuously opposed attempts by rival companies to introduce such systems. But it says this is not simply defending its near-monopoly on directory enquiry data. "People have to be asked if they want to be listed in our directory. They don't have that option here," said a spokesman.

Both organisations said the likeliest effect is that more people will go ex-directory. Already 56 per cent of Londoners are unlisted. People will be able to remove themselves from the list, via an Internet site that i-CD will run at www.i92.com. But the company has already decided that openness has its limits: it has voluntarily excluded data on Northern Ireland.

— Charles Arthur, Science Editor

Zinfandel? Wasn't he an Astronaut?



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TODAY'S NEWS

Brown to explain

The Chancellor, Gordon Brown, will make a statement to the Commons on Monday setting out the Government's policy towards a single currency. The Treasury said the Government was "acting decisively to stop speculation by making the statement ... at the earliest possible opportunity". Page 4

FA accuses Italy

The FA accused the Italian authorities of deliberately intimidating English supporters in a 50-page report on the trouble that marred England's World Cup qualifier in Rome this month. The FA said it believed that the overwhelming majority of England supporters conducted themselves with great restraint. Page 3

Children under curfew

Police and politicians are congratulating themselves on the opening night of what is, in all but name, a curfew on the streets of Britain. The Independent watched the operation on housing estates in the Scottish town of Hamilton as eight youngsters were picked up by police and returned to their parents. Page 16

New rights for Britons

The Government took the first step towards enshrining the protection of human rights in British law. Under proposals set out in a White Paper, people who believe their rights under the European Convention on Human Rights have been violated will, for the first time, be able to seek redress through the British courts. Page 10

SEEN & HEARD

The Spanish dictator Franco, who ruled for 40 years, was less successful in his first attempted romantic conquest. In 33 postcards from 1913, auctioned last night in Madrid, the pint-sized future despot pours his heart out to the teenage daughter of the officer commanding the Spanish African outpost of Melilla. "I love you greatly or rather very, very much," the 20-year-old second-lieutenant writes. Franco, who won medals in Spain's doomed campaign against Morocco, was no Don Juan. He courted Sofia Subiran, 15, with what she described as "exquisite delicacy", but she was put off by his high-pitched voice, stiffness and lack of poise. "I didn't like Franco," she said years later. "I was very pretty ... He was serious, too serious ... He was clumsy, poor thing."

Italians to blame for intimidating English fans, says FA report

The Italian authorities have been blamed for much of the violence during the World Cup qualifying game between England and Italy. The Italians could be fined and forced to change the way they handle future games, writes Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent.

English soccer supporters were "deliberately intimidated" by the Italian police during the World Cup game in Rome this month, according to a report by the Football Association.

The treatment of many English fans, who were involved in bloody confrontations with riot police at the stadium in Rome on 11 October, was described as "intolerable". A 50-page report concluded that "no serious efforts" were made by officers to prevent Italian fans throwing missiles, and that the police's "brutal treatment" in baton-charging sections of the crowd was unjustified. The authorities were also accused of "extreme provocation".

Some English supporters, however, were criticised for drunken and violent behaviour in the run-up to the match, which saw England draw 0-0 at the Olympic Stadium to qualify for the World Cup finals. Inadequate stewarding and an unwillingness to use British police expertise were also cited as reasons for the breakdown of order.

Fifa, the world football authority, yesterday said that Italy could be censured, but added it was unlikely that it would ban them from the competition. A spokesman said: "Italy could be yellow-carded and punished with a fine, for example, but I don't think Fifa will ban the Italians."

He added that the Italian authorities had until Monday to give their side of the story.

A spokesman from the Italian Embassy in London said that the FA's report was "one side of events" and that their interior min-

ister was completing his report. The hard-hitting response by the FA is certain to cause a major furore with the Italian authorities.

The FA's report was compiled from the experiences of almost 1,500 English supporters.

An FA statement said: "The FA believes the overwhelming majority of England supporters conducted themselves with great restraint on the night of October 11."

"This happened despite what would appear to have been deliberate intimidation, and sometimes extreme provocation, on the part of some of those responsible for their safety and security while on foreign soil."

"We are bound to stress our particular alarm at the fact that UK police officers who travelled to Rome were at best under-utilised, at worst deliberately ignored."

"There was no effective stewarding or adequate signage. The experiences of a large number of supporters before, during and after the match were intolerable."

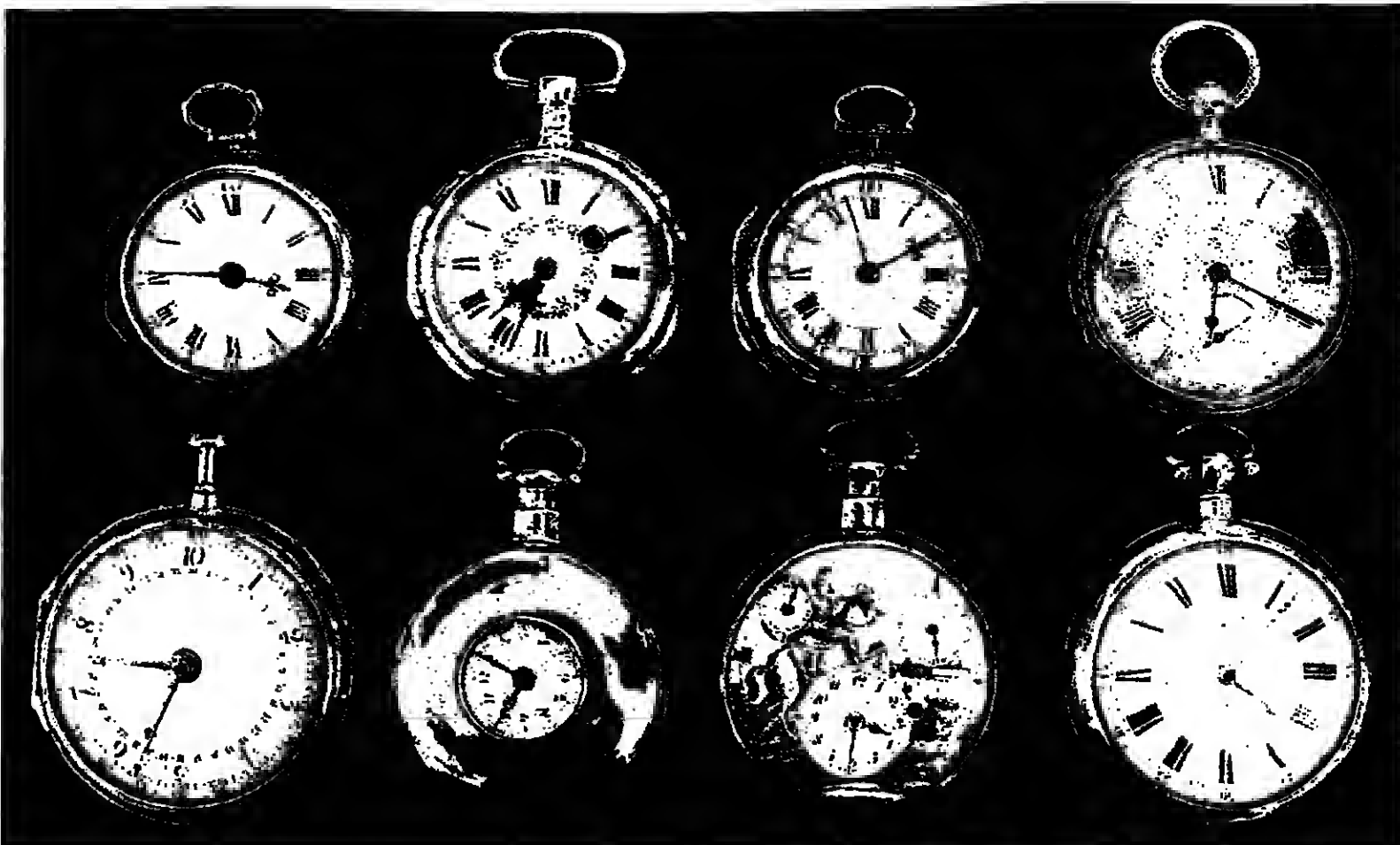
Millions of television viewers saw pictures of Italian policemen crushing English fans against barriers and hitting them with batons.

About 2,000 English fans were also sold tickets that would have placed them alongside Italian supporters. The report also found that crowds of supporters were caught in a bottleneck because of the time taken to check their tickets and to be searched by the authorities.

The report concedes that not all English fans behaved impeccably, either at or before the match, and that the FA is keen to see action taken by the Government to ensure that known trouble-makers are not allowed to travel to away matches in future.

Discussions with Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, about the issue are to take place.

David Davies, the FA director of public affairs, called on Fifa to carry out an independent investigation into the Rome incident. He also said that countries ought to draw up a standard code of conduct to be used for all international football matches.



Time for change: 17th- and 18th-century timepieces - and, yes, a pedometer (bottom left) - for sale at a London market Photograph: Brian Harris

Traditionalists sleep easy as clocks go back

As the clocks go back to give us all an extra hour in bed tonight, traditionalists can sleep easy that this is one ritual which looks set to continue unchanged.

Police, safety campaigners and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) backed last year's Private Member's Bill by Conservative John Butterfill which would have brought the United Kingdom into line with the rest of Western Europe by staying one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time in winter and two hours ahead in summer.

But there were howls of

protests from Scotland, where the Scottish Nationalist Party was among those who condemned the move. The nationalists said it would plunge Scots into morning darkness, by transferring the hours of daylight to the evening.

The protesters appear to have won. John Butterfill, who last year topped the annual Commons ballot for backbench bills, will not be getting another chance. He said yesterday that he was not aware that anybody would be taking the battle further. "I doubt it. Unless you get government support for it,

I don't think that it will happen."

There was a fairly determined group of opponents including some, although not all, Scottish MPs, and Europhobes who regarded the idea as another European plot, he said.

"But it would be amazingly useful. It would eliminate accidents and the police think it would reduce crime because criminals tend to operate in darkness but don't get up early."

"Business people want it because at the moment they're constantly one hour

adrift of their European counterparts."

He said civil servants in a number of government departments, including the Home Office, transport and health, had been very keen. But a Home Office spokeswoman said yesterday there were no government plans to put forward new legislation on the issue.

A spokeswoman for the CBI said that they had backed Mr Butterfill's bill because most of their members - with the principal exception of the construction industry - had expressed support for it.

But she said: "It seems to have died a death now. We're not lobbying at all."

The SNP is pleased. "We opposed it quite strongly last time and would do again. The arguments are still the same," a spokesman said.

"People don't want to be waking up and working until 12 in the afternoon in blackness. But it wasn't just Scotland - it would have meant a whole swathe down the coast of Wales and west of England would have been plunged into morning darkness. It was a bizarre proposal."

— Louise Jury

Vital statistics go awry on fashion's glossy night out

Vote recounts, resignations and deep embarrassment all round sullied this week's British Fashion Awards after a prize given to one leading designer was allocated to another.

Tamsin Blanchard, Fashion Editor, reports.

Antonio Berardi yesterday chose to decline the British Fashion Award for New Generation designer - mistakenly awarded to design duo Clements Ribeiro - declaring the business was a "farce".

Berardi, now in New York for last night's VHI Fashion Awards, had attended the ceremony on Wednesday night at the Royal Albert Hall as one of five New Generation nominees.

Berardi said: "I feel privileged and honoured to have been voted as New Generation designer for 1997, but the award given on Wednesday night reflects the intentions of the BFC [British Fashion Council] I cannot take the award away from Clements Ribeiro now they have been given it and

am very happy for them."

Press releases were sent out earlier on Wednesday afternoon confirming the winners for each category with Berardi as winner of the New Generation category. But at the awards, aired on Channel 5 last night, the winner was announced as Clements Ribeiro. Either Berardi got the votes or he did not. Voting forms are sent out in June to 600 press and buyers in the UK who vote for each of the eleven categories.

Yesterday, Claudia Marten, fashion director at Lynne Franks PR and the joint executive producer of the awards show handed in her resignation which was not accepted. She claimed that the mistake was "human error" on the night.

The morning after the awards, the press was told that the mistake was a typing error on the press release. Then, a statement said that the BFC was "investigating a possible error" - there was a discrepancy between the advance press release which indicated that Antonio Berardi had won and then the later presentation being made to Clements Ribeiro.

The plot thickened when the final statement arrived yesterday confirming that there had been an error which occurred when "the incorrect name card was inserted into the award presenter's envelope". After a recount, Antonio Berardi was officially declared the winner.

John Wilson, chief executive of the BFC, said yesterday that he and the chairman, John Horner, were "exceedingly embarrassed" but have set about trying to clean up the mess: "We are not prepared to see the integrity of the awards damaged."

No one was more surprised than Clements Ribeiro themselves. They had woo the award



Antonio Berardi Deprived of his moment of glory

last year and surely the whole point of the New Generation category is that the winner is "new". Yesterday, they accepted an apology from the BFC and relinquished the title.

The fact that Red or Dead (Street Style), Nicole Farhi (Contemporary Collection), Philip Treacy (Accessory Designer) and Alexander McQueen (Designer of the Year) all received the same awards as last year also raised question marks about the awards' voting system. Red Or Dead won for the third time running.

Hussein Chalayan, nominated as designer of the year, said, "there should be a new voting system which is more sympathetic to other designers who could also benefit from receiving such an award, rather than the same winners".

Alexander McQueen, joint winner of Designer of the Year with John Galiano has made it known that he does not wish to be nominated again after his successive triumph. Another industry insider commented that the final count of votes should be given to an external group to oversee so that any accusations of corruption would be unfounded.

IN THE INDEPENDENT ON MONDAY



THE DEBORAH ROSS INTERVIEW
Is Nicola Horlick superwoman, scapegoat, or simply a woman in need of protection (if only from herself)?

MEDIA

Why Christine Walker, adland's £400,000 year chief exec ended up in court

STYLE

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**Court hears case
loud and clear**

A man with hearing problems was yesterday convicted of shouting so loudly into his wife's ear that she suffered permanent damage.

Peter Pryor, 58, had denied causing actual bodily harm to his 54-year-old wife, Christine, in three shouting incidents in 1995 and 1996.

Judge Jeremy Griggs at Exeter Crown Court adjourned sentence for a probation report and extended bail for Pryor, of Victoria Road, Barnstaple, north Devon, on condition that he did not go to his wife's home or contact her.

The judge told Pryor the fact that he had granted bail was no indication of what he would decide and he had no preconceived ideas.

Outside court Pryor made no comment but his solicitor said: "He is obviously upset."

It had been claimed during the trial that Pryor held his wife's arms by her sides and shouted loudly in her ears at their home at the time. Century Farm, at Bittadon, north Devon.

Pryor, who is now living in rented accommodation, denied that the alleged incidents ever took place and said in court: "I do not know why she is making these allegations."

Mrs Pryor, who has been divorced from the defendant since the incidents, now has to wear a hearing aid and has whooshing and ringing noises in her ears almost constantly.

**Boy, 11, guilty of
sexual assault**

A schoolboy aged 11 was found guilty by a jury yesterday of indecently assaulting a boy of 12 after ambushing him and marching him to a derelict building.

The 11-year-old - who cannot be named because of a court order - was cleared during his trial of rape on the judge's directions. Yesterday he was given a two-year conditional discharge for the indecent assault and for robbing his victim of a pencil case, which he admitted.

Judge John Hopkin, sentencing him at Nottingham Crown Court, said the boy was already in the care of the local authority and would be returned to the secure accommodation where he has been for several months. The court heard that he was the subject of a care order which would last until he was 18.

Brown to rule out joining Emu in first wave

Gordon Brown is expected to rule out entering the single European currency in 1999 on Monday when he makes a long-awaited statement to Parliament on the government's position.

Speculation was growing last night that the statement might go further and rule out entry for the lifetime of this Parliament. However, the announcement was also likely to be couched in language which would suggest a positive approach to joining at some future time, according to some reports yesterday.

Last night Treasury press officers were refusing to elaborate on the announcement that a statement would be made, except to say that the Government was "acting decisively to stop speculation by making the statement to Parliament at the earliest possible opportunity".

The move came after weeks of rumour and counter-rumour during which ministers and their advisers had been strongly criticised for briefing newspapers, first that the Chancellor was keen to join at an early opportunity, and then later that

Britain would not join in the first wave.

Treasury sources were believed to have sanctioned a *Times* headline last weekend which ran: "Brown rules out single currency for lifetime of this Parliament". Observers now say they expect Monday's statement to go at least part of the way to confirming it.

The speech to Parliament will cover issues highlighted by Mr Brown in a speech to the Stock Exchange last week. He is likely to elaborate on the "five tests" of national economic interest which he has already said will underpin the decision-making process.

These are jobs, investment, the City of London, the flexibility of the markets and the need to match our economic cycles with the rest of Europe.

He will hope that clarification of the Government's position will soothe jittery nerves in the City, and silence Opposition critics.

Early yesterday, before the announcement was made, the Liberal Democrats called for a statement and accused the government of "shambolic confusion" over the single currency.

Fran Abrams, Political Correspondent

**Sandhurst lecturer
dies in blast**

Bomb disposal experts were drafted in and homes were evacuated after a lecturer at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst died in an explosion at his home.

Dr John Pimlott, 49, was found dead at his home in Camberley, Surrey, after what police described as a "tragic accident".

Families in neighbouring homes were evacuated while Army officers and police made the area safe.

Dr Pimlott, who is married with two children, was head of war studies at Sandhurst where he had worked, in various jobs, for 24 years. The family was being comforted by friends and relatives yesterday.

A Surrey Police spokesman said: "Investigations are now under way to determine what happened but it would seem that this was a tragic accident. The area is now being made safe."

It is believed that there were no suspicious circumstances surrounding his death.

The spokesman added: "We can confirm that there was an explosion in the house."

"The army were called because there is a lot of memorabilia in the house but none of it was found to be dangerous."

An Army spokesman said Mr Pimlott was made head of his department in 1994.

He added: "It would seem that Mr Pimlott was a high flier, he held a high position for a man of his age."

"He had written a number of books about conflict studies during his time at Sandhurst. By all accounts this seems to have been a very tragic accident."

**Pair remanded
over 'road rage'**

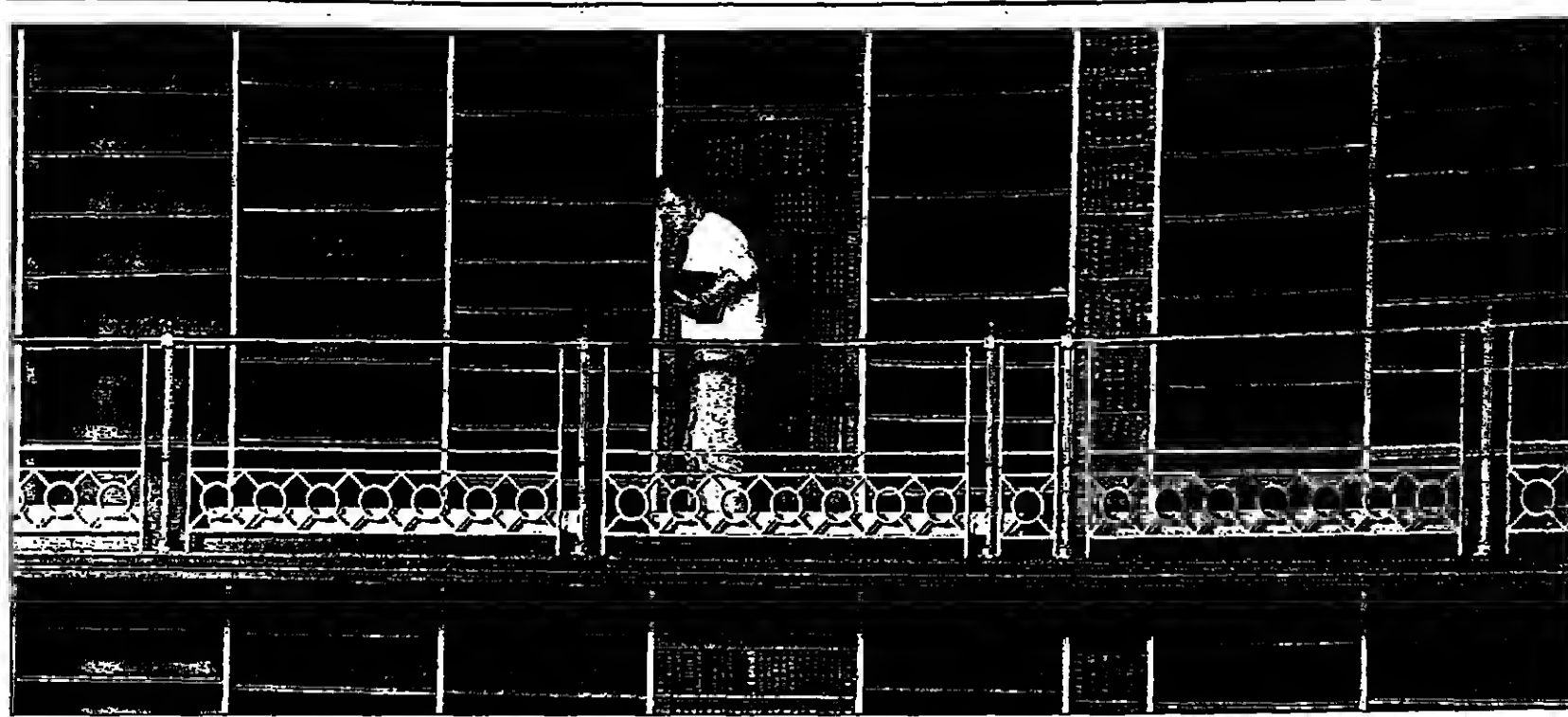
Two men appeared in court yesterday charged in connection with the alleged "road rage" deaths of a young couple.

Jason Humble, 32, and Keith Collier, 49, were remanded in custody by magistrates in Feltham, west London.

Humble, of Cove, Farnborough, Hampshire, was charged with two counts of manslaughter after Toby Exley, 22, and his girlfriend Karen Martin, 20, died in a car crash on the A316 in Hanworth, west London, on 6 October.

The couple died when their Ford Fiesta crossed the central reservation of a dual carriageway and smashed head on into the path of an oncoming car.

Mr Collier, also of Cove, was charged with assisting an offender by falsely reporting the theft of a car.



Love of books: The Round Room, scene of much great academic and romantic endeavour, today plays host to its last readers

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Round Reading Room speaks volumes

One hundred and forty years of tradition end today when the Round Reading Room at the British Museum closes.

Karl Marx formulated the tenets of Marxism under its stately dome; Charles Dickens researched his classics in the almost holy silence. And Germaine Greer shouted "Go away, you dirty old man," at "the north library lechers".

The Round Reading Room hosts its last readers today before it becomes a specialist library pertaining to the museum's objects as part of a £97m redevelopment, and readers move to a hi-tech room at the new

British Library at St Pancras.

A University of London history lecturer, Michael Drolet, researching his book on the French thinker De Tocqueville in the room yesterday, said: "It has an aura that is uplifting. The dome has a lot to do with that. And, yes, you do meet people here. You see what they are working on. You glance at their book, they glance at yours. Watching people, you see that they learn to be discreet, they whisper, then they move somewhere else to have coffee."

Mike Crump, director of reader services, praised the room's uniqueness in

putting books in the context of museum objects: one could research, read, then go to look at other objects in the British Museum. But he too had other memories.

"In 1973 Germaine Greer, in a loud voice, told one of the north library lechers 'Go away, you dirty old man.'" The Round Reading Room is in the north of the building. But north library lechers?

Mr Crump chose his words carefully: "The library has a reputation for being good for meeting people, for forming liaisons. If you remember that the post-graduate community is in every day, you've got

people with time to spend and misspend. And for me a lot of the emotional pull of the Round Reading Room ... is the memory of somewhere they hold deep in their heart from their time as students."

But the emotional pull is greater than that. It is the pull of beauty, of a secular cathedral. The room opened in 1857, conceived by the chief librarian, Anthony Panizzi, and designed by Sydney Smirke. The dome is on 20 cast-iron girders enclosed in concrete, with their lines visible on the interior, picked out in gold leaf.

— David Lister

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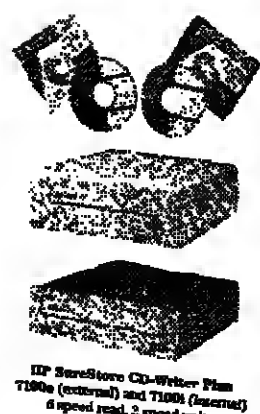
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Soft line by the imperial old boys' club

The Commonwealth summit opened yesterday with fanfares and triumphal speeches and boasts about its modernity. But Steve Crowshaw in Edinburgh found the organisation is still reluctant to confront member-states which breach its own code on human rights.

Chief Emeka Anyaoku, secretary-general of the Commonwealth, called for the outcome of the summit to be one of "confidence and hope", and for "advancement in conditions of freedom, peace and harmony". Officials confirmed that, although the Queen will keep her post as symbolic head of the Commonwealth, Prince Charles or his son William will not necessarily inherit the job. Sir Humphrey Maud, deputy secretary-general of the Commonwealth, emphasised that there is no constitutional bar to change. "A rotating head, a British head, a non-British head, no head at all - you fill in the blanks".

Mr Anyaoku talked of the Queen, who for the first time spoke at a summit opening, as "the steady hand which has helped the Commonwealth through some particularly testing times". No successor would be perceived in the same way.

Nigeria, indignant at being criticised for its record on human rights, has dangled the threat in recent days that it might leave the Commonwealth. As one commentator noted: "They've adapted Groucho Marx. The line seems to be: 'I will resign from any club that hasn't got the guts to throw me out'." It was unclear whether the threat to walk out was mere bluff. A summons for diplomats in Nigeria yesterday, at which it was rumoured that it would announce a walk-out, was cancelled at the last moment, just as a similar summons had been cancelled the previous day.

The ministerial group which has met for the past two years

failed to call for Nigeria's expulsion, despite a resolution at the last Commonwealth summit that expulsion would follow unless there was "demonstrable progress" towards democracy.

The Commonwealth has not even signed up for the limited package of sanctions that the European Union agreed last year, including visa restrictions for members of the government and a ban on arms sales. Theoretically, an oil embargo remains a possibility, somewhere down the line. But past experience suggests the Commonwealth would shy away from this "robust set of sanctions" like a bolting horse.

Nigerian rights activists were furious at what they saw as a collective cop-out. A joint statement talked of "emasculated principles" and complained: "The Commonwealth has told the whole world, in unmistakable terms, that absolutely no value is to be placed on its word". Signatories of the opponents of the regime - including the Nobel prize-winning writer Wole Soyinka, and Ken Wiwa, son of the executed activist Ken Saro-Wiwa - said: "The Commonwealth can only be relevant to the citizens of its member-states if it puts their interest before that of undemocratic and authoritarian structures of power".

As is traditional, one of these arguments could be heard on the stage of the summit itself, where all was sweetness and light. Government leaders were keen to play down all areas of disagreement. The Indian Prime Minister, I.K. Gujral, insisted there were no problems between Britain and India, despite the problems of the recent royal tour and the offence caused by Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's comments on Kashmir.

The Prime Minister's only criticism of Mr Cook was oblique and he insisted there were no hard feelings about Mr Cook's comments, or about comments by the Duke of Edinburgh which downplayed the massacre at Amritsar. "We've learned to take things in our stride. India's a large country, and very tolerant. Let's leave it at that," he said.

Queen@show.

New Britain, New Fun. That was the host government's message to the Commonwealth leaders.

As the summit opened, the Queen and the assembled presidents and prime ministers were treated to a video show entitled "A Young Country" (to be precise: "www.a young country@britain.gov"). This glossy corporate video provided a new look for the new millennium. Out went biscuit tin images of thatched cottages and Changing of the Guard. In came modern graphics and spinning compact discs.

Tony Blair said: "As you have just seen, this is a time of renewal and redefinition - for Britain and, I believe, for the Commonwealth." He insisted: "The Britain of the elite is over."

The Queen also declared her support for the New Britain line. In a text authorised by Downing Street, she, too, referred to the video. "When we arrived, we saw some film which I hope explained why we were so keen to host this meeting here in the United Kingdom," she said.

Yet she looked vaguely disconcerted when listening to the souped-up version of the national anthem, which sounded as though it had been produced by synthesiser.



Cherie Blair and Banni Anyaoku, wife of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, with a pipe band during a visit to a 'family festival' on the first day of the heads-of-government meeting in Edinburgh.

Photograph: PA

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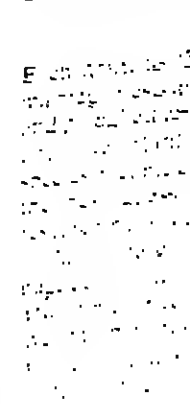
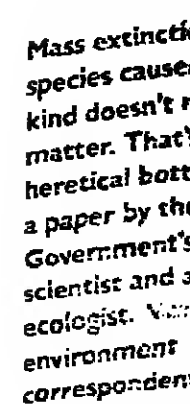
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Wiping out wildlife 'may not matter'

Mass extinction of species caused by human kind doesn't really matter. That's the heretical bottom line of a paper by the Government's chief scientist and an Oxford ecologist. Nicholas Schoon, environment correspondent, explains.

Each hour, as the earth's remaining forests are burnt, felled and ploughed up, between two and five plant and animal species become extinct. That is the best guess of biologists researching this dismal field.

At that rate, there will be a bug dent in the 14 million plant and animal species thought to live in tropical rainforests within a few decades.

"I find it very hard to believe that it's going to make any difference to us personally," said Oxford University ecologist Dr Sean Nee yesterday. "I don't know, but I doubt it."

He accepts 1,500 different species of birds are in real danger of becoming extinct in the next few decades, thanks to man-made habitat destruction. "But birds as an evolutionary grouping thrive in man-made habitats like fields and towns. They're going to carry on."

These are not the ramblings of an ignorant anti-green. Yesterday Dr Nee's paper on extinction, co-authored by the Government's chief scientist, Professor Robert May, was published in the prestigious journal *Science*.

The summary of their paper says: "Approximately 80 per cent of the underlying tree of life can survive even when approximately 95 per cent of species are lost."

The tree in question represents evolutionary history. As species evolve over millions of years, new ones split off from established ones like twigs from a branch. When a species becomes extinct - as often happens naturally - the branch reaches a dead end, but species which have split off earlier on survive and, in turn, split off new species, thereby founding a new branch.

All the earth's surviving species can be envisaged as all the twig ends on the outermost edge of the tree (with many more dead ends further in). Together these living species represent all the life that has gone before them.

But as the earth's forests are cleared, twigs are being lopped off faster and faster. "We have shown that much of the tree can survive even vigorous pruning," says the paper. The great breakthroughs of life - inventions as diverse as feathers, fur, shells and carapaces - will carry on.

If there is a man-made mass extinction, as now seems certain, there will still be a sufficient diversity of species to allow evolution to continue.

The scientists conclude that as far as conserving overall evolutionary history is concerned, there is little virtue in trying to conserve one species above another based on how long its own history is.

"Take two closely related birds, both little brown jobs. If one split off from the other just 100,000 years ago and they are still pretty similar, then if one becomes extinct does it matter?"

Dr Nee recognises that each species is unique, and extinction eliminates it for eternity. "But I guess I'm taking the naughty side - it's a bit more fun," he said.



Rare breed: Fell ponies are falling sick with diarrhoea and pneumonia. Many have had to be put down

Photograph: Kit Houghton

Mystery illness threatens fell ponies

Fell ponies, one of Britain's rare breeds, are threatened by a mystery illness which compromises their immune system and leaves them prey to infection.

Until now the sickness has been little discussed, mainly because breeders of the hardy ponies feared that by doing so they would lose customers, said Sally Wood, secretary of the Fell Pony Society, yesterday.

But with about 50 foals falling sick each year, it has become a real

threat to the future of the breed which can no longer be ignored.

They are one of Britain's 11 breeds of pony, and were used mainly as pack horses. By the end of the Second World War, the fell ponies were close to extinction because people no longer had any use for them.

The breed has been revived and there are thought to be about 4,000 of them, producing 300 registered foals a year. Centred on Cumbria

and the northern Pennines, with some still living in herds out on the hills, they are now used mainly for riding, showing and pulling traps. They are stocky, hairy and stand up to four feet eight inches tall.

Ms Wood said: "When it strikes, a healthy foal will quickly fall prey to any variety of illnesses which may set in." Cuts are slow to heal, diarrhoea becomes chronic and lungs become infected with pneumonia. The individual infections can be

cured, but then another comes along. Victims are lethargic, anemic and many have had to be put down.

Liverpool University's Veterinary School has examined several of the ponies, both dead and alive. Along with the society, it is now seeking funding to run a full investigation into the sickness and to develop a diagnostic test. That will cost £50,000.

— Nicholas Schoon.

Recycling urged

Hundreds of environmental campaigners will protest outside electrical stores today. Their aim is to force the UK electrical industry to pay for goods to be reused and for products to be labelled with their expected lifespan.

Glenda Cooper, Consumer Affairs Correspondent, writes.

More than six million electrical items are dumped every year in the UK. Yet research suggests that up to 70 per cent of televisions and other goods could be recycled.

Today, more than 1,000 people at 85 Friends of the Earth groups throughout the UK will be calling on the UK electrical industry to pay for the collection of electrical goods for reuse and recycling, for products to be labelled with their expected lifespan and for retailers to offer free extended guarantees.

"We want to move the debate on recycling forward from packaging to the actual products people have in their homes," said Anna Thomas, waste campaigner for FoE. "We also want to highlight the issue of producer responsibility that it should be the producer that takes their products back."

The EU designated waste from electrical and electronic equipment as a priority project in 1991 and a proposed European Directive for household consumer goods would ensure that manufacturers take responsibility for their product "from cradle to grave".

The measure is likely to be modelled on the proposal for end-of-life vehicles with the emphasis being on diverting materials containing hazardous substances away from incineration and landfill.

One proposal that has been put forward by the Industry Council For Electronic Equipment Recycling (ICER) is that taxpayers could foot the bill through council tax payments.

Friends of the Earth is opposing demands by manufacturers and retailers that the cost of collection should fall on council tax payers.

A spokesman for Dixons said yesterday: "We do a lot of recycling. All our white goods that are returned to us we recycle. We are sympathetic to the aim of recycling but whichever way the costs are worked out the excess will be borne by the consumer whether they pay through council tax or find it reflected in higher prices."

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NEW ENGLAND THE MIDTOWN HOTEL	1 Feb '98	GATWICK - BOSTON	£339	£306
CALIFORNIA - SKI CONTINENTAL 99 TRAVELLERS INN	5 Jan '98	HEATHROW - SAN FRANCISCO	£369	£333
ORLANDO BROADWAY INN	5 Jan '98	GATWICK - ORLANDO	£399	£360
MIAMI CHATEAU BY THE SEA	5 Jan '98	HEATHROW - MIAMI	£399	£360
LAS VEGAS THE IMPERIAL PALACE	5 Jan '98	HEATHROW - LOS ANGELES	£409	£369

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Firework training call

A fireworks display which spiralled out of control and left 24 people needing hospital treatment has sparked fresh safety warnings and a call for special training for people wanting to conduct bonfire night displays.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents has proposed the introduction of a national qualification which would have to be achieved before anybody is allowed to stage a display. The idea was backed by trading standards officials who said that under present regulations large and potentially dangerous fireworks could get into the wrong hands.

A RSPA spokesman, Roger Vincent, said: "We believe that all display artists need to be registered properly and that there needs to be a recognised training scheme for those who run displays. We hope [this] would serve to reduce the number of firework-related accidents."

The call follows an incident in Willenhall, West Midlands, on Monday, where a number of fireworks shot into a crowd of more than 300 people. One child suffered serious burns to his arm and hands and the others were taken to hospital with minor burns and shock.

— Amanda Kelly

Ulster victims may get their own memorial

A new commission to consider how to commemorate victims of the Northern Ireland troubles was launched yesterday by the Government.

The announcement was almost certainly timed to coincide with the Ulster Unionists' annual conference, which takes place today in Newcastle, County Down. The unionists have long campaigned for people who died at the hands of terrorists to be named on war memorials.

The new commission will look at the possibility of a memorial to the 3,000 people killed in the province during the past 28 years. It could also consider new assistance for the families of the dead.

Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, a senior civil servant, has been asked to lead the commission. His brief is to examine the feasibility of providing greater recognition for the victims, both dead and alive, while recognising that the conflict has had "appalling repercussions" for many people who live outside Northern Ireland.

The possibility of building a memorial "reflecting both the sorrows of the past and



Soundbite: Mo Mowlam with Belfast's Lord Mayor, Alban Maginness Photograph: PA

hope for a stable and peaceful future" will be considered. Speaking during a visit to Belfast City Council, Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said the welfare of victims' families

was an important issue. "We will look at the question of pain and suffering across the board. Victim welfare is a terribly important issue, and one we should address. It has been addressed in a fairly

haphazard way up until now. "We would like a memorial in some sense to that pain and suffering, what form that takes I have not decided. We want to see what suggestions come from the community,"

she said. The announcement, which comes three weeks before Remembrance Day and the anniversary of the Enniskillen bombing, builds on a promise made by Tony Blair when he visited the province earlier this month.

The Ulster Unionist Party's security spokesman, Ken Maginness, welcomed the announcement.

"Members of the police and UDR have long been neglected in terms of peace and reconciliation funding, which was intended to alleviate problems suffered by victims of violence," he said.

The Democratic Unionist Party's justice spokesman, Ian Paisley Junior, said any monument "must not be polluted by the network of pretend grief and politically oriented suffering of those groups who have exploited the Troubles." The body should not be hijacked by the "politically unscrupulous," he said.

Alex Maskie, a Sinn Féin councillor, said it was vital that the suffering of both communities was recognised. "Republicans do not have the monopoly on suffering,"

Judge criticises Venables as he jails 'blatant' perjurer

Terry Venables' right-hand man was jailed for four months yesterday for helping the former Tottenham Hotspur boss manage the club and a West End nightclub in "flagrant" breach of a bankruptcy ban.

Eddie Ashby, 53, the "financial guru" behind the man who was ousted as chief executive at the football club, was branded a "blatant perjurer" at Knightsbridge Crown Court by Judge Timothy Pontius for lying about how he illegally hired and fired staff, authorised salary increases, and took a string of high-powered decisions.

Judge Pontius condemned both the disgraced businessman and Mr Venables, the former England coach - who had given evidence on his behalf - for "deliberately and dishonestly trying to mislead the jury."

Ashby, who already had 43 failed companies behind him when he began chairing management meetings at Spurs, signing letters as "General Manager" and taking a major role running Scribes West, the private club Mr Venables then owned, was also condemned for indulging in a "transparent charade" of a defence - trying to put the blame on the new White Hart Lane chief, Alan Sugar.

Judge Pontius told Ashby: "It is a regrettable and sad aspect of this case that you, a person of impeccable character hitherto, chose blatantly to give perjured evidence before the jury and, more seriously, to call as a witness on your behalf your boss, Terry Venables, to give evidence which the jury plainly found to be at best fanciful and at worst intended by you both to deliberately and dishonestly mislead them as to the true position. I have not the slightest hesitation myself in preferring the second view."

Ashby's dishonesty was a "wholly flagrant" breach of the law committed over a "considerable" period.

He had signed a court document after being declared bankrupt at Brighton County Court in June 1991, in which he acknowledged that he was prohibited from being involved in company management, the judge said.

The businessman knew "precisely" what he could and could not do - but despite this he continued playing a central role in Mr Venables's Scribes West nightclub until others discovered the truth about him and forced him to relinquish his position.

Butcher was misinformed over E. coli ban on meats

The butcher at the centre of last year's E. coli food poisoning outbreak in Scotland was not told by health officials that a ban on selling cooked meats also applied to orders he had already made up, a court heard yesterday.

Graham Bryceland, North Lanarkshire Council's head of protective services, admitted that said he had not thought of raising concerns with John Barr, a butcher in Wishaw, about any orders which had already been made up.

Giving evidence on the fifth day of Mr Barr's trial at Hamilton Sheriff Court, Mr Bryceland told the court during cross-examination that he "assumed" orders would be made up fresh.

The court had earlier heard that several people fell ill with E. coli food poisoning after eating cooked meat at a party on Saturday 23 November last year which was allegedly supplied from Mr Barr's shop Wishaw. The butcher denies culpably, wilfully and recklessly supplying

cooked meat. The charge alleges he supplied 100 slices each of baked ham, roast beef, and cooked turkey, knowing they were to be eaten at a function at the Cascade bar, Wishaw.

The court was told that a meeting of the council's outbreak control committee had been held at Law Hospital on 26 November. A minute from the meeting read out in court stated that environmental health officers had visited Mr Barr at his shop on 22 November and asked him to stop "selling and distributing" any cold meat products.

Despite the fact that he had checked the minutes himself, Mr Bryceland conceded that the word "distributing" was never mentioned to Mr Barr and that he took the word sale to mean distributing.

Mr Bryceland then agreed with Mr Moore that he had made a mistake in not telling the outbreak control committee about what was said to Barr. The trial continues.

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Stepford wife or feminist? Hillary Clinton seems to be coming to terms with her ambiguous role as First Lady, and to playing second fiddle to husband Bill

Photograph: AFP

Hillary comes to terms with age and role

America's First Lady, Hillary Clinton, turns 50 on Sunday. After a turbulent five years in the White House, she seems calmer, more confident and less concerned about what people think of her. Mary Dejevsky asks: has she fulfilled her ambition to change the office? Or has the office changed her?

Two years ago, close to the nadir of her fortunes, Hillary Clinton mourned her 48th birthday as marking the irrevocable onset of middle age. This time around, she says with a smile: "Turning 50 doesn't bother me ... realising that I'm a half-century old, that's different!"

Americans now seem comfortable with Hillary Clinton, and she with them. The vicious attacks, personal and professional, have faded. She is no longer the unelected harridan who wanted to usurp the presidency in pursuit of her own suspiciously left-wing social programme. She has almost stopped referring to herself as Hillary Rodham Clinton - the inclusion of her maiden name being a declaration of professional independence - and so have reporters. She is back to plain Hillary Clinton.

With her only daughter now at college in California, she has thrown herself into good works and travel. Since the summer, she has toured Latin America. She has spoken out on battered women and childcare. This week, she chaired a White House conference on what she called the silent crisis faced by women with children who work and cannot find good childcare they can afford.

Next week, she visits Ireland and Britain. As on all her recent travels, she will be received by political leaders. She will doubtless be carrying messages. But she will be discreet.

For Hillary Clinton has learnt to observe limits. "Her" subjects are the rights of women and children. At this week's White House conference on day-care, she set out the problems: it was her husband, who offered some - very tentative - solutions and some - small amount of - money. She knows her place.

When Bill Clinton was campaigning for the presidency in 1992, Hillary Clinton talked about being her husband's "partner". By standing by her man on television, she saved his political career from extinction in the Jennifer Flowers scandal. In some quarters, her performance was put down, uncharitably, not to love or loyalty, but to her supposed ambition to be president-by-proxy.

But it was also hailed as a watershed. There was political life after sexual scandal after all. If Hillary could accept Bill as he was, then so could America. This was a "liberated" woman speaking on her own terms,

making her own decisions. When Bill was elected President, her popularity ratings were higher than his. But there was always a gender gap. She fell into what could be described as the Margaret Thatcher, assertive-woman, trap. Men found her aggressive, manipulative, unwomanly, threatening. Women, especially single and professional women, saw in her an admirable example of how high-flying career and motherhood could be combined; they rooted for her.

Then Bill gave her the office-space she wanted in the White House, and a proper job, charting a reform of the American health system, and the backlash began. She was blamed for having the popular staff of the White House travel office sacked, a decision for which Bill eventually took responsibility. She was blamed for holding her health reform committees in camera. And while her competence was lauded, her blueprint for health reform was rejected. From mid-1994, it was open season on Hillary.

The minutiae of her personal and professional life in Arkansas, when her husband was state governor, were subject to intense media scrutiny. There were insinuations of affairs, shady business deals, insider-trading on the stockmarket, and influence-peddling. She was even accused of attending seances to conjure up the spirit of an eminent predecessor, Eleanor Roosevelt.

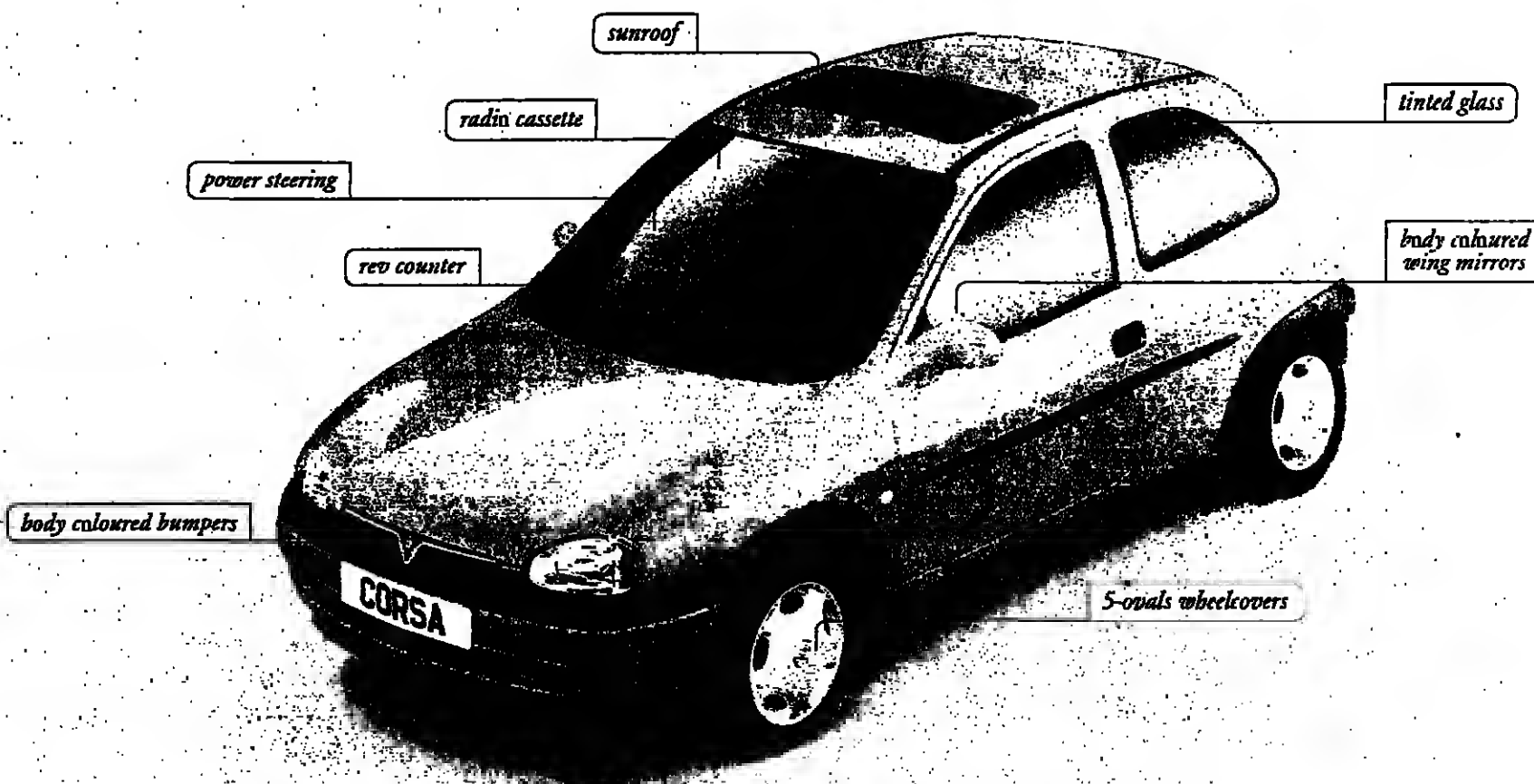
The low point was her summons to appear before a grand jury to testify about missing legal records relating to the Whitewater land deal. More than three years later, the Whitewater case drifts on, drowning in detail, but none of the accusations against Hillary has been proved.

For a while, Hillary Clinton left the scene, emerging only as a dutiful wife and mother: a "Stepford" first lady, said one wag, alluding to the film satirising zombie wives of America's suburbia.

After playing her part, decorously, in her husband's successful campaign for re-election, Hillary Clinton is now making a comeback. Some have commented that with her higher profile since Chelsea left for college, she is upstaging her husband. But there are few signs of that. There is not the slightest hint either - as there was five years ago - that she might run for President or Vice-President, to succeed her husband.

The sad fact is that she has been tamed. America was not ready for a first lady who was a professional woman in her own right. The political establishment could not, or would not, use her strengths. As the formerly aggressive American feminist movement has settled into an occasionally discontented but comfortable middle age, so has Hillary. She has ditched the cookie-baking, but not pushed the bounds of office as far as she hoped. Like so many of her predecessors, she must choose pastel suits and conceal the extent of her partnership in power.

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Publication of the much-awaited Bill to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into British law delighted most observers yesterday. Only the Tories appeared unhappy. But as Michael Streeter explains, the Bill raises some intriguing, and so far unanswered, questions.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, was in an understandably bullish mood yesterday as he published the White Paper and accompanying Bill which will incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law.

"Today is an historic day in terms of the rights of the British people," he said. "It is the first time since 1689 that there will have been a British Bill of Rights."

The mood among some human-rights groups, who had feared that the Government might produce a very weak incorporation of the Convention, was almost equally good. "It's brilliant," said one. "They've addressed nearly all of our points."

The Human Rights Bill, though it provides no new rights for individuals, does mean they will be able to avoid what Mr Straw calls the "long hard road" to the court in Strasbourg.

Instead, litigants will be able to use British courts and British judges interpreting the Convention to hear their grievances, though the French-based court will remain as last port of call.

There has been much debate about whether the Government would adopt the Canadian or New Zealand models of human rights incorporation, the former being regarded as tougher than the second.

In fact, Mr Straw has produced a "British" solution, which addresses criticism from some quarters that incorporation interferes with the sover-



cignty of Parliament. This means that while judges will be able to declare past or future Acts of Parliament "incompatible" with the Convention, they will not, like a Supreme Court, be able to strike them down. Instead, ministers will be expected to amend the conflicting law by a new, fast track procedure, subject to Parliamentary approval. If ministers refuse to act,

the case can still go on to Strasbourg.

The shadow home secretary, Sir Brian Mawhinney, claimed that British judges would be able to tell Parliament what laws to pass, and that these judges would be tied by old European judgements.

The White Paper, however, says that previous Strashourg rulings will not be binding.

The Convention may encourage British judges to extend laws into new areas. Jennifer McDermott, media partner at London solicitors Lovell White Durrant, expects courts to develop both the laws of privacy and freedom of expression, contained in Articles 8 and 10 of the Convention. This could involve extending the right of privacy from public bodies un-

der the Convention to private bodies such as newspapers.

The human-rights group Liberty said their only disappointment was the failure to set up a Human Rights Commission otherwise they welcomed the Bill. Director John Wadham said: "We've been campaigning for this for years, so we're absolutely delighted."

Leading article, page 20

By a delicious coincidence, Britain yesterday lost its 50th judgement by the European Court of Human Rights on the same morning it published plans to incorporate the European Convention into UK law.

morning it published plans to bring the convention into UK law.

The court backed the case of Stanley Johnson, who was convicted of assault and kept in a mental hospital even after being declared free from mental illness. For three and a half years Mr Johnson, from Leicester, was held because a supervised hostel place could not be found and because doctors were concerned that he might "explode" if exposed to the pressures of daily life without such support. But his lawyers told the judges in Strasbourg that since Mr Johnson's eventual release in January 1993, he had had no mental problems and was *not* in need of any cr

Yesterday the Court said Britain was in breach of Article 5 of the Convention which safeguards the right to "liberty and security"

Mr Johnson, who was awarded £10,000 costs, was sent to the Rampton psychiatric hospital in 1984 after punching a woman. He was diagnosed by the "responsible medical officer" (RMO) as suffering from "schizophrenia superimposed on a personality disorder" as a result of "schizophrenic personality". In June 1989, the Mental Health Review Tribunal accepted a report by the RMO stating that Mr Johnson was now free of mental illness but was not fit for discharge because he needed rehabilitation. Later, the tribunal again accepted he was not mentally ill, but because of his refusal to accept responsibility for his behaviour, it refused his request for discharge. In January 1990, the tribunal again refused his request for discharge pending suitable accommodation. In January 1993, Mr Johnson was finally released.

Yesterday's ruling follows a long line of judgements against gay men in the armed forces. In 1989 the criticism following case involving Ian Harman and Patricia Hewitt over surveillance by MI6 led to the security service being put on a statutory footing for the first time. The Court is currently considering a case brought by four former military personnel sacked for being homosexual - an action still likely to be contested despite yesterday's White Paper.

Once enacted, how will the Human Rights Act work? Michael Streever says it will give no new rights – but makes existing ones enforceable by British judges and therefore more 'accessible'.

The Act will incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights, first ratified in 1951, directly into British law. Although there are no new rights, experts expect judges to extend branches of the common law, using the Act as a guideline. Privacy and freedom of expression are two such areas.

The Act will apply to actions of public authorities, such as police, immigration, courts, public utilities, the Government (but not Parliament) where they

allegedly breach an individual's rights. It does not affect relations between private groups, such as a company and individuals. Litigants will be able to use the act in two ways. One is to bring an action against an authority. The other is to cite the incorporated Convention as a criminal or civil defence at any level of court.

The courts can give the "appropriate" remedy available to them, and this can include damages - but only in line with those currently available at Strasbourg, typically between £5,000 and £10,000. Only the higher courts, the High Court and above, will be able to make "declaration of incompatibility"

This power will be one of the central parts of the Act. Judges, where possible, will regard legislation, past and future, as compatible with the Convention articles and interpret accordingly. Where they are irrecon-

cilable, the judge will issue a "declaration of incompatibility".

This does not give judges the right to strike down Acts of Parliament (though they can do this to so-called secondary legislation). The Government says this preserves the sovereignty of Parliament.

But if ministers refuse, the case would be taken to Strasbourg - as at present.

More likely, ministers will seek to change the conflicting law by statutory instrument, under a fast-track procedure set up under the law. These need approval by both Houses.

Ministers will also be expected to ensure that all new legislation is compatible with the

There will also be a legal group established between departments of state to ensure the compatibility of all draft legislation.

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Staring into the abyss: A father and son, relatives of massacre victims in the town of Sisi Moussa.

Photograph: Benito/FSP

Bloody terror that renders children speechless with fear

Algeria's psychologists are overwhelmed by the number of civilians - especially children - traumatised by the bloodletting, which has itself reached the limits of insanity. Robert Fisk in Algiers finds that patients often refuse to respond to treatment.

Khadija was eight when she heard gunmen on the stairwell of her suburban Algiers home. Peering from her family's front door, she watched as a neighbour appeared, only to be shot down in front of her. She doesn't know who the killers were or even remember the neighbour's name. But when Dr

Ahmed Ait-Sidhoum's assistants asked Khadija to draw a picture of the six members of her family, the result disturbed all of them.

Her drawing shows a startled female figure in purple - perhaps her mother, perhaps Khadija - standing at the top of a pile of worm creatures that hang, rope-like, across the page. There is another splodge of purple to the right of the frightened human. It could be a pool of blood, the same colour as the woman's dress. Khadija has tried to write something in Arabic among the "worms" but it is meaningless.

"We found that Khadija had been so upset that she had developed a urinary infection," Dr Ait-Sidhoum says. "Many children have developed physical symptoms from their terrible experiences. They develop physical illnesses because they have no capacity to work things out mentally. There was another little girl, called Sadjira, who was gang-raped. She developed an ovarian cyst. Others simply cannot communicate any more."

When she went for treatment to Dr Ait-Sidhoum, the president of the Algerian Society for Psychological Research, 12-year-old Amira could not conduct a conversation. She, too, had been gang-raped - in her own home - and Dr Ait-Sidhoum tried desperately to talk to her about her experience. "She was incapable of talking about anything. When I offered her a cup of tea, she would say 'yes please'. When I asked her name, she would reply. But she was incapable of holding a conversation."

If Amira's response to her horrific ordeal seems typical, Dr Ait-Sidhoum's experience has persuaded him that all Algeria's massacre survivors will react differently.

He recalls a family of four, in which the father was the victim of an assassination attempt. "The daughter was referred to me because she had learning difficulties at school, a common problem for children after a trauma like this. She couldn't remember things. But when I met the father, who was a doctor, I found he had even worse memory problems. After a while, the father suffered cardiac problems, the mother developed a pre-cancerous uterine problem and the aunt, the

fourth member of the family, who was a very cheerful and outgoing person, became phobic and frightened of leaving her home. The father moved home but even at our consultations, he was convinced someone would burst in and kill him. But the little girl made a perfect recovery."

The Algerian government refers many trauma victims to Dr Ait-Sidhoum's centre, where they remain until family or friends can look after them, although the authorities seem strangely unwilling to publicise this work. The doctor found massacre survivors who already suffered psychological disorders developed far worse symptoms after witnessing violent incidents.

"A persecution complex would later prevent a survivor going out of his or her home. A disorganised person found that they could scarcely function at all. There are also a lot of people who just keep seeing, repeated before their eyes, the dreadful things that happened in front of them. They have nightmares about what happened and, during the day, are completely absorbed by it and unable to think about anything else."

Dr Ait-Sidhoum's three female colleagues have decided the force of a survivor's personality decides the success of their recovery. "Their psychological strength determines whether they can get over it or not," Dr Ait-Sidhoum says. "I treated a teacher whose family were slaughtered in front of her. They even cut her throat and she pretended to be dead. But she has totally recovered and is back at work."

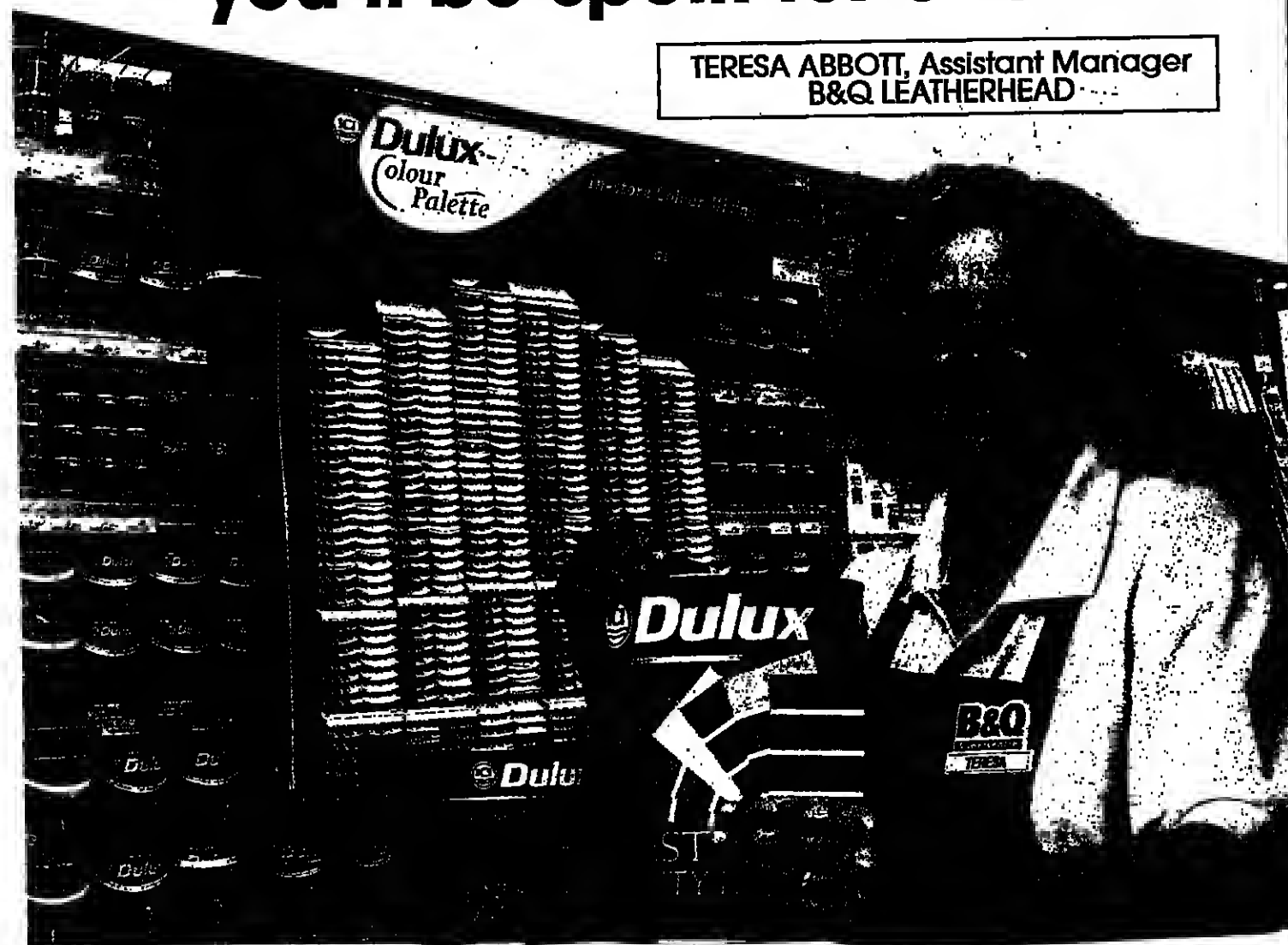
Of the worst psychological horror - that of the victim who knows he is to die - Dr Ait-Sidhoum prefers not to speculate. "Some will lose their head. Some will have heart attacks. Others will be unable to speak."

Of the mortality of those who cut the throats of babies, Dr Ait-Sidhoum says little. "There was a man called Ali - he was 26 - and he was a member of an armed group in 1992. He trained with other men. But his parents found him a job ... and he bought a car and left the armed group. Last month, he joined the government's 'auto-defence' organisation [Algeria's government-armed militia] to chase the terrorists!"

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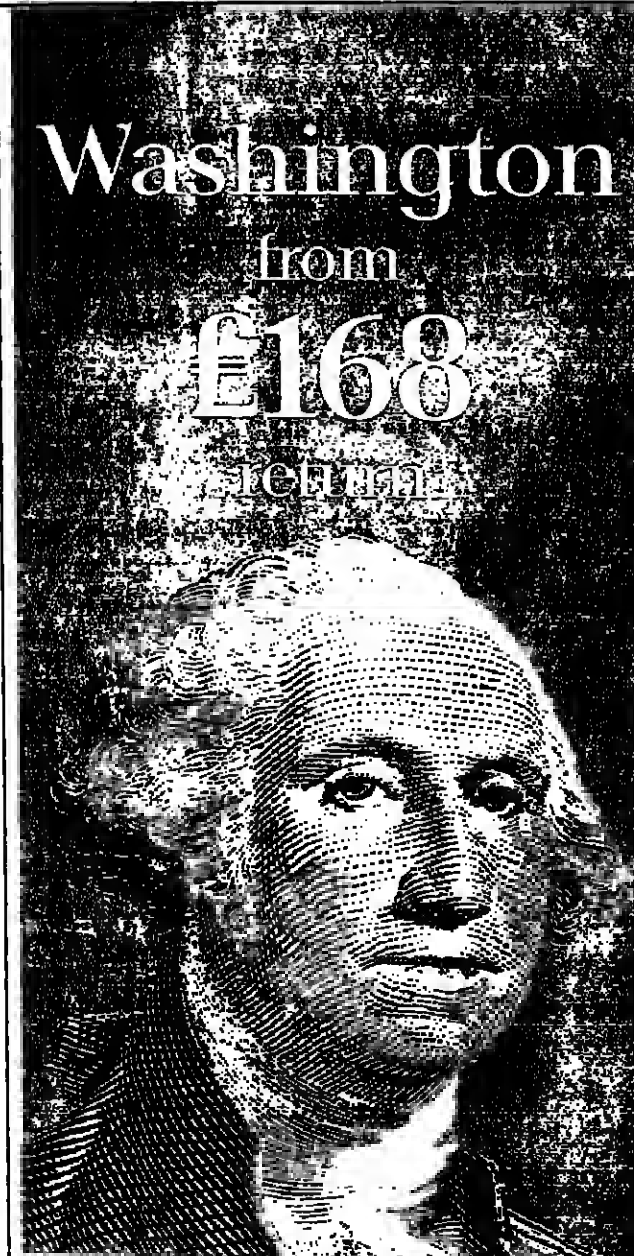
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High-flying Milosevic crony gunned down on streets of Belgrade

One of the most powerful men in Serbia, the businessman and politician Zoran Todorovic, was shot dead in Belgrade yesterday in what appeared to be a classic gangland hit. Andrew Gumbel says the killing has struck at the heart of President Milosevic's power machine.

Zoran Todorovic was one of those slick, over-dressed power-mongers who popped up in Belgrade during the Yugoslav wars of secession and, by strange coincidence, seemed to become very rich just as

Serbia was being hit by international sanctions, a massive drop in living standards and hyper-inflation.

He certainly had plenty of enemies: the democratic opposition, which loathed him for his hardline opinions and his toadying to the regime, and public opinion, which looked upon him as a gangster and nicknamed him Kundak, or rifle butt. But he also had friends in high places, most notably Mirjana Markovic, the wife of the president, Stobodan Milosevic, who cultivated him and launched both his political and his commercial careers.

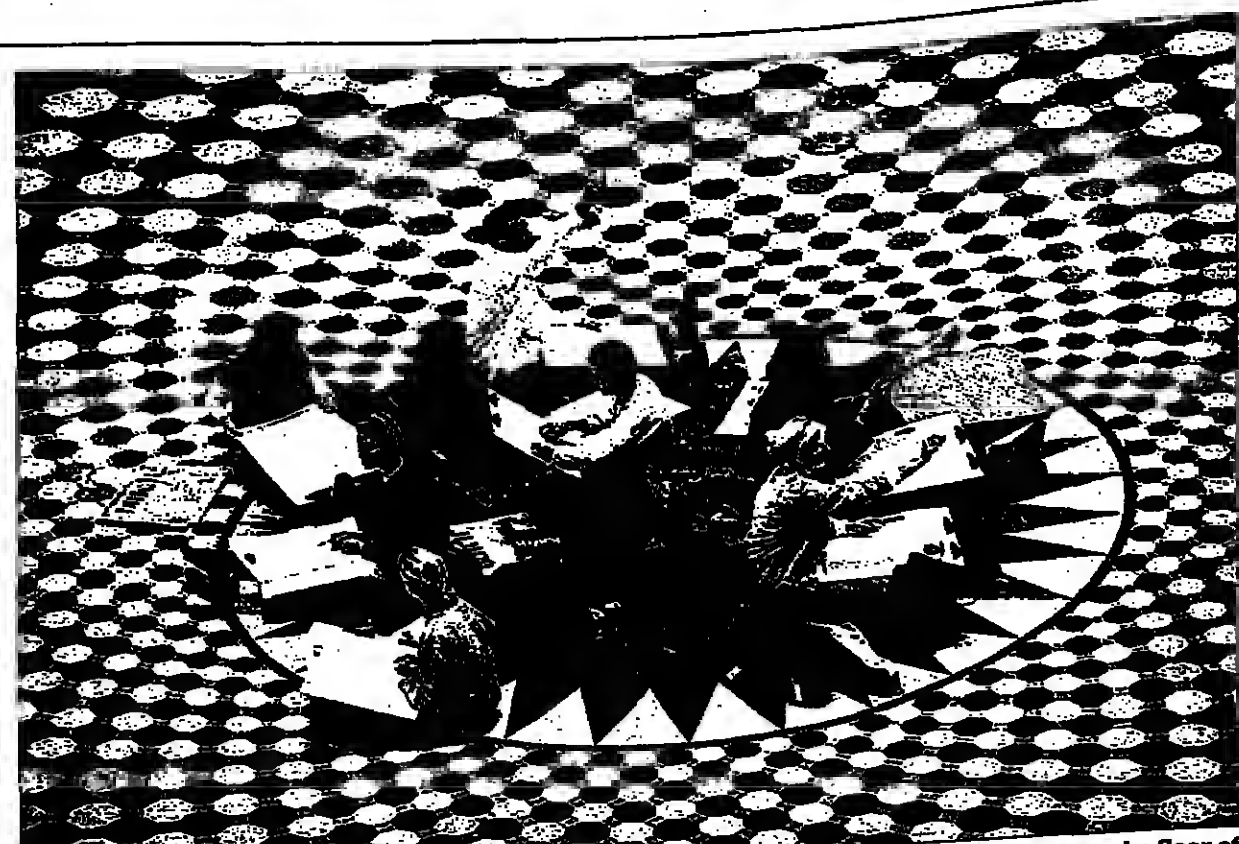
With Mrs Markovic, he helped found the leftist political party JUL, in theory an advocate of Marxism but in reality a lobby group for Serbia's politically connected class of *nouveaux riches*. Under her tutelage, he rose through the ranks of the state-run petrol companies — a key sector during the war when oil had to be smuggled into the country — to become general manager at Beopetrol, the second largest petrol company in the country.

His murder can only be interpreted as an audacious strike at the very heart of the Milosevic power machine. The 38-year-old Todorovic was gunned down as he got out of his car outside Beopetrol's headquarters and died instantly, while his bodyguard was badly injured. A lone man was seen running away from the scene shortly afterwards, but no clues were immediately forthcoming about the identity of the killer.

Such murders are becoming increasingly common in Belgrade. Earlier this year, Mr Milosevic's police chief, Radovan Stojicic, was killed in similar fashion, as was Vlada Kovacevic, a black marketer and friend of Mr Milosevic's son Marko.

Nobody knows the precise motives for these murders, but they seem to be a product of the twilight world where politics and organised crime in Serbia meet.

Todorovic's murder coincides with a period of high political uncertainty, with Mr Milosevic battling to establish real authority through his new post of Yugoslav President and struggling to keep control of his old job as head of state in Serbia. Earlier this month, presidential elections in Serbia were declared null and void because they failed to attract the required 50 per cent of registered voters.



Freehand: Students from the Ohio State University School of Architecture practise their drawing on the floor of the Rotunda at the Ohio State House, Columbus
Photograph: Jack Kustron/AP

Solomon Islands tells US to clean up its wrecks

The Solomon Islands wants the United States and Japan to clean up some of the mess they left behind after the Second World War battles in the Pacific.

The Prime Minister, Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, said yesterday that at least 50 battleships and aircraft carriers, wrecks from the Pacific conflict, are rotting on the sea bed near the historic battleground of Guadalcanal and polluting the water.

"It is now more than 50 years that these relics and debris have been sitting there, and they are causing ... a threat to Solomon Islanders who basically have very limited food in terms of land mass, but have a huge sea resource which this issue threatens," Mr Ulufa'alu said during a visit to Australia.

"Therefore we would like to see those who are responsible, or have been responsible for the

Second World War, both Allies and Japanese, join us in an international drive to do the clean-up."

The wrecks are lying in Iron Bottom Sound, a narrow body of water between the Solomons main island of Guadalcanal and the volcanic island of Savo, Mr Ulufa'alu said.

Guadalcanal was the site of the 1943 Allied landing which marked a turnaround in the Pacific conflict between Allied forces — including the US, Australia and Britain — and Japan.

Mr Ulufa'alu said that while no scientific studies had been conducted to determine the extent of environmental damage caused by the wrecks, anecdotal evidence suggested that fish, coral and other marine life are dying. The Solomon Islands is unable to deal with the problem itself, he said.

— AP, Brisbane

Danish court jails nurse charged with killing 22

A court yesterday jailed the nurse charged with killing 22 patients at nursing home, after police presented new evidence in the case. The suspect voluntarily appeared in court so the three judges could see "who she is really — an ordinary 32-year-old woman," the defence lawyer Mette Lauritzen said. The nurse allegedly killed the victims, aged 65 to 97, by giving them overdoses of a morphine-based drug. The victims died between August 1994 and March 1997. The nurse also is charged with theft and embezzlement of 629,000 kroner (\$108,000) from nursing home patients. Police referred to the killings as "euthanasia," but it was not clear if any of the victims were cases of assisted suicide. Both euthanasia and assisted suicide are illegal in Denmark.

—AP

Sportscaster goes free after admitting biting lover

The judge in the Marv Albert sex trial declined to impose any sentence on Friday after the American sportscaster pleaded guilty to biting a lover during a sexual encounter.

Arlington Circuit Judge Benjamin Kendrick said the case against Mr Albert, who was fired from his job as an NBC sportscaster after his misdemeanor guilty plea, could be dismissed if he showed progress in counseling.

He pleaded guilty in September to assault to avoid a more serious charge of forcible sodomy. He was accused of repeatedly hitting a woman on the back in a hotel in this Washington suburb in February and forcing her to perform oral sex, which is classified as sodomy in Virginia.

—Reuters

Irish draft whaling peace plan

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) gave Ireland the green light to draft a plan to break years of deadlock between whalers and their opponents in the organisation. IWC member states underscored their guarded support for the initiative by Irish Whaling Commissioner and IWC vice-chairman Michael Canny by electing him chairman at the annual meeting. Canny's proposal would lift a 1982 IWC moratorium on commercial whaling, but limit hunting to coastal areas, and only for local consumption or aboriginal subsistence needs. Canny drew up his plan amid a surge in whale kills by Japanese and Norwegian hunters, to 1,043 in the past 12 months from around 350 a year at the start of the decade.

— Reuters

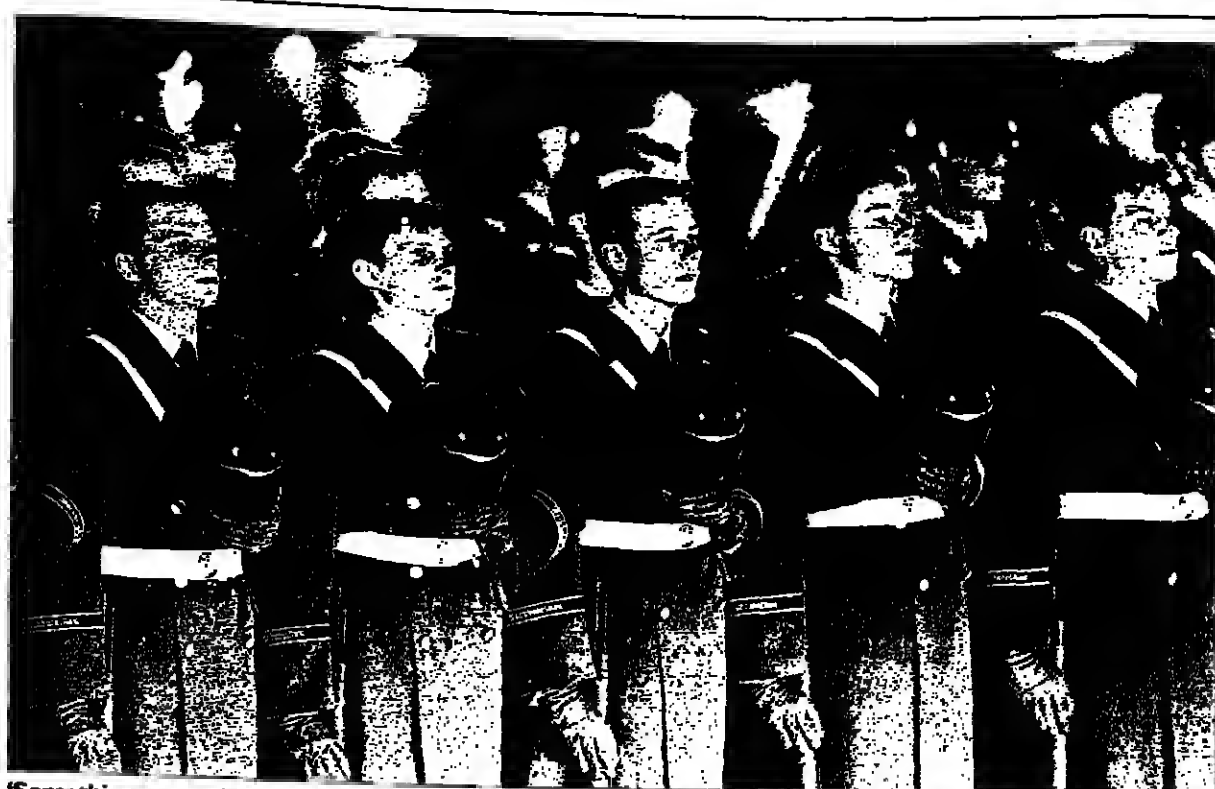
Hostage gives Chechens slip

A French aid worker headed home to France yesterday, two days after he escaped from four months of captivity in the rebel Russian republic of Chechnya.

Christophe André, who worked for the international aid group Medecins sans Frontieres, told the Interfax news agency that he managed to remove the handcuffs that tied him to a radiator, and slipped out through an unlocked door. He walked for a few hours before hitching a ride to the Chechen capital, Grozny. Interfax said. Four workers for the French aid group Equilibre kidnapped in August remain missing, as do two Hungarian church workers.

—AP

SMOKING CAN CAUSE
Chief Medical Officer
1 mg Tar



Something rotten in the Bundeswehr: Ministers are demanding stricter vetting of recruits Photograph: Reuters

German army shocked by revelation of unit's second neo-Nazi videotape

A neo-Nazi video starring soldiers of the Bundeswehr has shocked Germany. Horrified politicians recall that similarly repulsive footage emerged from the same source only three months ago. Imre Karacs asks if this another isolated incident, or a trend

Five hours of racist banter filmed at barracks of the German army threw the government into disarray yesterday, sparking a row over measures proposed by the defence ministry to counter the threat.

After viewing some of the tape, which was obtained by the SAT-1 commercial television station, Volker Rühe, Defence Minister, called for stricter vetting of recruits.

This was attacked by the Justice Minister, Edzard Schmidt-Jortzig, as unconstitutional. The ministerial quarrel is set to

continue next week, when parliament's defence committee discusses the "scandal video", which was made three or four years ago but only surfaced this week.

Just as Germany has had to come to terms in recent years with neo-Nazis in its midst it is confronted with evidence that even the democratic army is not immune to the disease.

"They always said an extreme-right culture could never emerge in the German army," said Dieter Heistermann, defence spokesman of the opposition Social Democrats. "But the fact that for three years nobody realised what was going on there shows something is rotten in the Bundeswehr."

There is much in the footage to justify this claim. To a sound-track of neo-Nazi rock, soldiers and officers of the 571 Mountain Infantry Battalion are seen giving the Hitler salute, discussing the "Jewish problem" - "the demons of the human race" - and singing anti-Semitic songs.

One soldier says: "What about the six million Jews? - All lies." An officer is seen wearing a T-shirt with the name of the skin-head band Skrewdriver; another T-shirt proclaims that "Rudolf Hess lives".

The unit seems familiar with all the major bands and their songs, as well as classics such as the ballad "Eternal Germany - Holy Reich". Most of the soldiers appear to be blind drunk, enacting puerile scenes of homosexual encounters interspersed with fantasy Jew-baiting.

One volunteer to be the anti-hero of the plot: "I am a Jew, I take the German people's money."

Whereupon his comrades give him a good thrashing - in jest, of course. Some of the film is similar to a video shown by SAT-1 three months ago, in which soldiers played out a scene of killings and rape in the forests of Bosnia. The resemblance is no coincidence. The "Bosnian" tape was also produced by the 517th Battalion, though not by the same people.

How Yeltsin led Russia into the Chechen quagmire

President Boris Yeltsin is not quite the aloof tsar he seems. Evidence in a book published yesterday about how the most catastrophic decision of his presidency - the invasion of Chechnya - was made turns conventional orthodoxy on its head. It shows how the President personally drove through the plan to launch a military crackdown, while letting his subordinates take the heat.

In effect he turned his Security Council into a politburo when it met on 29 November 1994 after the failure of a covert operation to topple the rebel regime. Yuri Kalmykov, then justice minister, said it was clear from the President's tone that his mind had been made up. All present were told to vote for an invasion. "The President said: 'Let's vote.' I said: 'I want to speak.' 'No, we vote without discussion.' 'It is a purely Soviet system', Mr Kalmykov said in an interview before his death in January this year. Mr Yeltsin "could not tolerate" any show of dissent. The process was now irreversible and 12 days later a 40,000-strong force rolled into Chechnya. Mr Yeltsin went into hospital for a routine nose operation, still bawling made no public comment on the crisis. Mr Kalmykov resigned.

Some officials believe the war, which ended two years later in Russian defeat, could have been averted if the rebel president, Dzhokhar Dudayev, had obtained the meeting he was seeking, but was denied, with Mr Yeltsin or the Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin. If only his pride had been satisfied he would have been ready to moderate his demands on

Chechen independence, they say. Two top Russian politicians now reveal that a scheduled meeting between General Dudayev and Mr Chernomyrdin was mysteriously cancelled just as the war was starting.

The top Russian negotiator, Vyacheslav Mikhailov, said he wound up peace talks on the understanding that a meeting would take place. Gen Dudayev later told another nego-



Yeltsin: No dissent

tiator, Arkady Volsky, the only Russian official who met him during the war, that he had a special new uniform made for the encounter. Who called off the meeting? By then Mr Yeltsin was in hospital and had delegated power to hardliners clustered around his bodyguard, Alexander Kozhakov. In all likelihood the planned meeting was quashed on their orders in favour of pursuing the invasion. The war in Chechnya cost 50,000 lives.

— Thomas de Waal

'Chechnya: a small victorious war', by Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, is published by Pan.

EU divisions open up over pace of expansion to east

Deep divisions over the pace of the European Union's planned expansion into Eastern Europe will be exposed today when EU foreign ministers gather in Luxembourg. The European Commission has recommended opening negotiations in the new year with a first-wave group of five countries - Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Estonia, plus Cyprus.

But some member states, led by Sweden and Denmark, want negotiations to start at the same time with all 10 Eastern European candidates, even though Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Romania are deemed unprepared.

The Scandinavians argue that a selective approach to the accession talks will seriously damage efforts to promote democracy, human rights and

economic reform in the countries where it is most needed.

The debate will be complicated by a row between the existing member states over how to pay for enlargement, and on whether the bloc's expensive farm and regional aid policies will first have to undergo major surgery. Spain, which fears big cuts in aid, has already signalled it will block enlargement unless the annual £60bn budget is expanded.

France, Italy and Belgium have issued a formal warning that they will stall the admission of any new member states until the EU decision-making structures are streamlined. They fear stagnation in a union of 20 if individual countries are allowed to veto decisions, and they blame the Germans for failing to back radical voting changes.

JFK's son visits Cuba

John F. Kennedy Jr is visiting Cuba, almost 35 years to the day after the missile crisis in which his father faced down the Soviet Union. "He is there as a journalist," said a spokeswoman for Mr Kennedy. She said she had no other details about the trip. Mr Kennedy is founder and editor of the political magazine *George*. A receptionist at the Melia-Cohiba hotel in Havana

said Mr Kennedy was registered there. The world crisis that began when missile sites were being built on the island came to a head on 22 October 1962, when President John F. Kennedy established a quarantine to prevent Soviet missiles from being delivered to Cuba, after which the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, backed down.

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Warning
Nicotine



SILK
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ULTRA

TOBACCO SERIOUSLY
DAMAGES HEALTH

1 mg

16/YOUTH IN TROUBLE

The town that called the police at bed time

Police and politicians were congratulating themselves yesterday on the opening night of what is, in all but name, the first curfew on the streets of Britain. Stephen Goodwin was on estates in Hamilton, Scotland, as eight youngsters were picked up by police and taken back to their parents.

Strathclyde Police called it a "child safety initiative". They could have got a snappier title from the back of one of the many ice-cream vans which cruise the Hamilton housing estates - "Watch the Weans". The weans themselves have no respect for the constabulary's linguistic contortions and call the initiative requiring them to be indoors after dark a "curfew".

And for the first night at least it was pure entertainment. The media circus had come to town, with its cameras, lights and mobile phones, and despite near-zero temperatures there were more youngsters on the streets than police or tenants could remember.

"I didn't know there were so many weans in Whitehill," said a woman standing outside a heavily gridded store as knots of youngsters, some as young as six or seven, thronged around reporters and photographers.

Whitehill is the grimmest of the three housing estates chosen for the six-month pilot curfews. The scheme is a joint effort by Strathclyde police and South Lanarkshire Council to deal with vandalism, under-age drinking and fighting and to make parents aware of their responsibilities. "While you are watching a drama your kids could be involved in one," an advertising hoarding being towed around the streets warns.

The police say youngsters out late are at risk of sexual abuse, drug pushers and other "malevolent influences".

Some 1,500 people live in Whitehill and though the council has spent £5.5m refurbishing properties on the post-war estate it still looks a hard place to grow up. Several of the four-in-a-block homes surrounding the bleak civic centre are daubed with graffiti. Nearly 2,500 people live on each of the other schemes involved - Hillhouse and Fairhill.

The eight children stopped by the police and taken home in the unreal circumstances of the first night were aged from 11 to 14, an equal number of boys and girls. Chief Superintendent Jim Elliot, commander of the Hamilton Division, said the parents had reacted positively to their action. "One



The nanny state: police question a youngster as the 'child safety initiative' begins

Photograph: Colin McPherson

said it was 'first class'. The youngsters were all of an age where their presence on the streets during darkness gave cause for concern, he said. However, as to why these eight out of hundreds of children on the streets should have been selected he was unforthcoming, apart from adding: "We had to start somewhere."

It was a night of confused stories. Chief Superintendent Elliot heard one about journalists handing out "penny bangers" to youngsters and in another a man armed with a home-made bazooka was said to be scouring Whitehill firing at reporters.

Yet none of the 50-strong media contingent seemed to

come away with serious scars, and nor did their P- and R-registered cars.

Every one of more than a score of youngsters spoken to by *The Independent* in Whitehill and Hillhouse hated the police. "They're just shite," one 13-year-old said. "They stop us so they can be cheeky and act the big man."

Reaction among parents was mixed, though the initiative was a direct response to local householders' concerns.

One mother said youths drinking beneath her flat window made nights hell.

But on Whitehill a group of three women said the exercise was a waste of money and the police should concentrate on

the "real criminals" of the estate. "They should get rid of the smackheads and the druggies and then we could let the weans go out," one mother said.

With all the police activity a gang of a dozen or more alleged drug users whom the women said gathered by the civic centre was nowhere to be seen.

Strathclyde's Chief Constable, John Orr, said the exercise was not about imposing a draconian curfew or infringing civil liberty.

One knot of youngsters away from the spotlight was approached by an officer getting out of a patrol car and reminded: "Don't you forget, we'll be back next week when there's nae cameras."

Laser pen dangers highlighted as injuries increase

A new craze involving powerful laser pens has caused a string of injuries. As the number of victims rises, writes Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent, so does the pressure to introduce a ban.

A teacher, a Methodist minister, and a fireman, are among the latest victims of laser pens that can cause injury and temporary blindness.

The hand-held devices, which are supposed to be used by lecturers and teachers to pinpoint features with a red beam, are becoming increasingly popular with school-children and youths. They have a growing appeal at clubs and football matches. The battery-powered pointers can send out a thin beam of light for 300ft.

In two new cases a woman teacher had to go to hospital after a pupil shone a laser beam into her eye and a minister had to halt his sermon as a light was fired at him from outside the church.

The Rev Bruce Deakin was preaching to his congregation on Sunday evening 13 days ago when he suddenly felt a bright light in his eye.

"I felt disturbed and my vision became blurred," recalled Mr Deakin, minister at The Avenue Methodist church, Sale, Cheshire.

"Someone had caught my eye with a laser light by shining it through the church's glass door. I was worried about it because I know about the dangers these things can cause. In the end I had to stop and ask

someone to get rid of the person with the laser."

A fireman in Scotland recently needed hospital treatment for temporary blindness caused by a laser pen. Gordon Anderson, 38, from Glenrothes, Fife, was targeted by a gang of youths as he brought his fire engine into the local station.

And on Thursday the first prosecution took place against someone for using one of the pens, which cost between £40 and £65, but can be purchased for as little as £10 abroad and off street sellers. Mark Taberner, 19, was given an absolute discharge and ordered to pay £25 costs at Leicester magistrates, after admitting common assault by shining a laser into a policeman's eyes.

The Home Office says the police already have the powers to arrest anyone caught with a laser pen if they believe they intend to cause injury. Those convicted could face up to four years in jail. But as the pens become more widely available, particularly in the North-east, trading standards officers are expected to press the Government to introduce a ban.

Experts have warned that exposure could lead to permanent eye damage, particularly if the laser light is a more powerful variety. There is also a danger for motorists if they are temporarily blinded and lose control of their vehicle - a bus driver in Cheshire is claiming that his left eye is irrevocably damaged after being hit by a laser beam. Professor John Haywood, a medical physicist, said: "In the wrong hands they are as harmful as knives. This is a very serious health issue - these pens are marketed as toys."

NEW WEAPON IN UNRULY PUPILS' ARMOURY

A female teacher was waiting in the dinner queue at her school in Warrington, Cheshire, when she suddenly felt a sharp pain in her eye.

A 15-year-old boy had fired a laser beam at her face. "She felt discomfort and her eye started to water," said the deputy headmaster of Padgate High School.

"She had to cover it and was taken to hospital, but fortunately there was no permanent damage. We decided the teacher had been assaulted."

The school suspended the pupil responsible about a month ago for several days as a punishment and have banned the pen. It has also warned parents in a newsletter about the lasers. The comprehensive school contacted the police and the local authority to seek advice. "We tried to find out how dangerous the pens are, but the health and safety people didn't know much about it at this stage," said the deputy. He added that there have been reports of youngsters taking the pens to football games.

MILLIONS FACE STARVATION IN NORTH KOREA

This winter may prove to have devastating consequences for the people of North Korea. With the public's support, the Red Cross has ensured that basic medical and food aid has been reaching those who need it most. But supplies are running dangerously low at a time when help is needed more than ever before.

For the third consecutive year, a combination of devastating floods and drought has ruined harvests and destroyed homes. In parts of North Korea children are already having to live on a diet of tree bark and roots. But, without urgent help, many will not survive the bitter cold of the North Korean winter.

Help is needed urgently to avoid this catastrophe. In addition to food and medical equipment, blankets and winter jackets are now desperately needed. You can do something to prevent huge numbers of children suffering through the winter months. £26 could help feed a family of four for two months.

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The most heavily armed people in the world

Guns are everywhere in Yemen – as many as three for every one of the 17 million Yemenis, making them the most heavily armed people in the world. Patrick Cockburn in Sana'a says guns may have helped the tribesmen retain their personal freedom, but at a high price to the country.

When Yemeni tribesmen recently released a group of foreign tourists they had kidnapped, they gave the women silver jewellery to show there were no hard feelings. The presents for the men were equally traditional: each was handed an old-fashioned but serviceable sub-machine-gun as a keepsake.

Yemen has often been called the Wild West of the Arab world, a place where the independent tribesman, loyal to his sheikh before the central government, is king. A better analogy might be the Scottish Highlands before the battle of Culloden, with the Kalashnikov replacing the claymore as the symbol of tribal society.

Government authority does not extend far beyond the outskirts of the cities, a fact made clear when we tried to visit Jihana, about 15 miles from Sana'a, the capital, where every second shop sells arms. We never made it. A few miles outside the city we came upon an army checkpoint, where the soldier on duty raised his hands to his head in theatrical alarm at the idea of a foreigner going further down the road.

Eventually he agreed that we could go on, but suggested we take two soldiers as bodyguards. At the next checkpoint, a fortified military position defended by 40 troops, however, the officer in charge, though in a friendly mood as he chewed leaves of qat, a mildly narcotic plant, insisted that we return to Sana'a. "There are many problems between the government and the tribes here," he explained. "Perhaps you will get hijacked."

Given that this is exactly what had happened a week before to Henry Thompson, a 38-year-old British aid worker, as he drove on the busy main road south of Sana'a, the threat did not seem remote. "Most of Yemen is safe," asserted a diplomat back in the capital, "if

you don't go off the beaten track." It is a significant qualification, because it is down such tracks and dirt roads that most Yemenis live in their stone-built villages, often built on pinnacles of rock or clinging to the side of mountains to leave land free for cultivation.

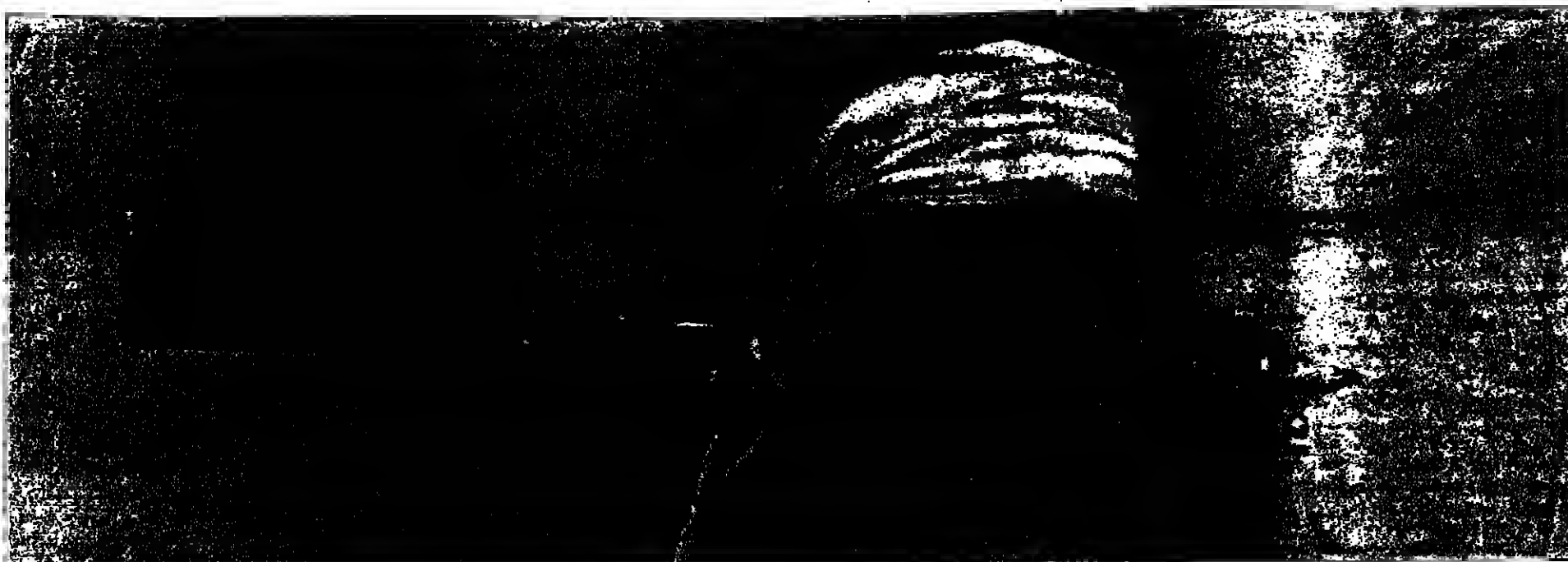
The mountains, where a few tribesmen can cut a road, have enabled the tribes to maintain their independence and weakened the central governments. On the positive side, the weakness of the state – and the ability of the individual and tribe to protest effectively – gives political life in Yemen a democratic, though anarchic, flavour, which is unique in the Arab world outside Lebanon.

When the government raised the price of diesel this week farmers immediately held protest rallies. At Dhamar, an old city of stone tower houses in the centre of a fertile mountain basin, they closed the main road and engaged the army in a firefight which left two farmers and one soldier dead.

Yemeni journalists complain they are prevented from giving the facts (the official government figure was just one dead at Dhamar). But even this muffled version of life in Yemen sounds dramatic enough. For instance, the weekly paper *al-Wahdani* earlier this month reported that a bomb had exploded outside the tax authority in Sana'a, and that a German scholar had escaped kidnapping by three armed men, though her driver was killed. The main story in the same newspaper reported indignantly on a road which Saudi Arabia is alleged to be building illegally on the Yemeni side of the two countries' disputed border.

Such developments worry Yemenis more than gunfights, because Yemen's politics revolve round their relationship with their wealthier but less populous northern neighbour. In 1990, Saudi Arabia expelled 850,000 Yemeni workers. The economic disaster which followed was one reason why south Yemen tried to secede in 1994, provoking a savage civil war in which several thousand Yemenis died.

Yemen pays a high price for the survival of the sturdy independent tribesmen. A Yemeni proverb says: "A Yemeni can be rented but not bought." The problem is that they are rented quite often – and invariably by Saudi Arabia. Like the old Scottish clans, the tribes of Yemen can be bought by anybody with money in his pocket.



Gun law: In the Wild West of the Arab world, the independent tribesman is king

Photograph from *Impressions of Yemen* by Pascal and Maria Maréchaux (Flammarion)



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Gentle defendant earns top marks from witness box

Riding down in the lift from his hotel room yesterday, Barry Scheck, the star lawyer on Louise Woodward's defence team, recognised someone from the court, leaned across to him and implored: "She is 100 per cent innocent. You do know that, don't you? Don't you?"

Why so anxious, Mr Scheck? Obviously, he had not yet had time to peruse the morning's papers and see their decidedly sympathetic take on the three hours that Louise was on the stand on Thursday.

"Experts: Woodward did well." "Composure under fire earns teen high marks." "Teenager's testimony sways local audience." "Gentle defendant makes Murder One seem a stretch". And those are from just one paper.

Readers were even treated with the opinions of an eye-blink expert. Did you notice, for example, that Louise's eyes were only going at a rate of 11 blinks a minute while under direct examination by her own lawyer, and at just 13 blinks a minute when facing the prosecutor? The average rate for all of us is 15 to 25 blinks.

"She exudes a sense of self-confidence and self-control," the expert opined. Such a blink-rate "does not suggest someone who is easily prone to temperamental outbursts."

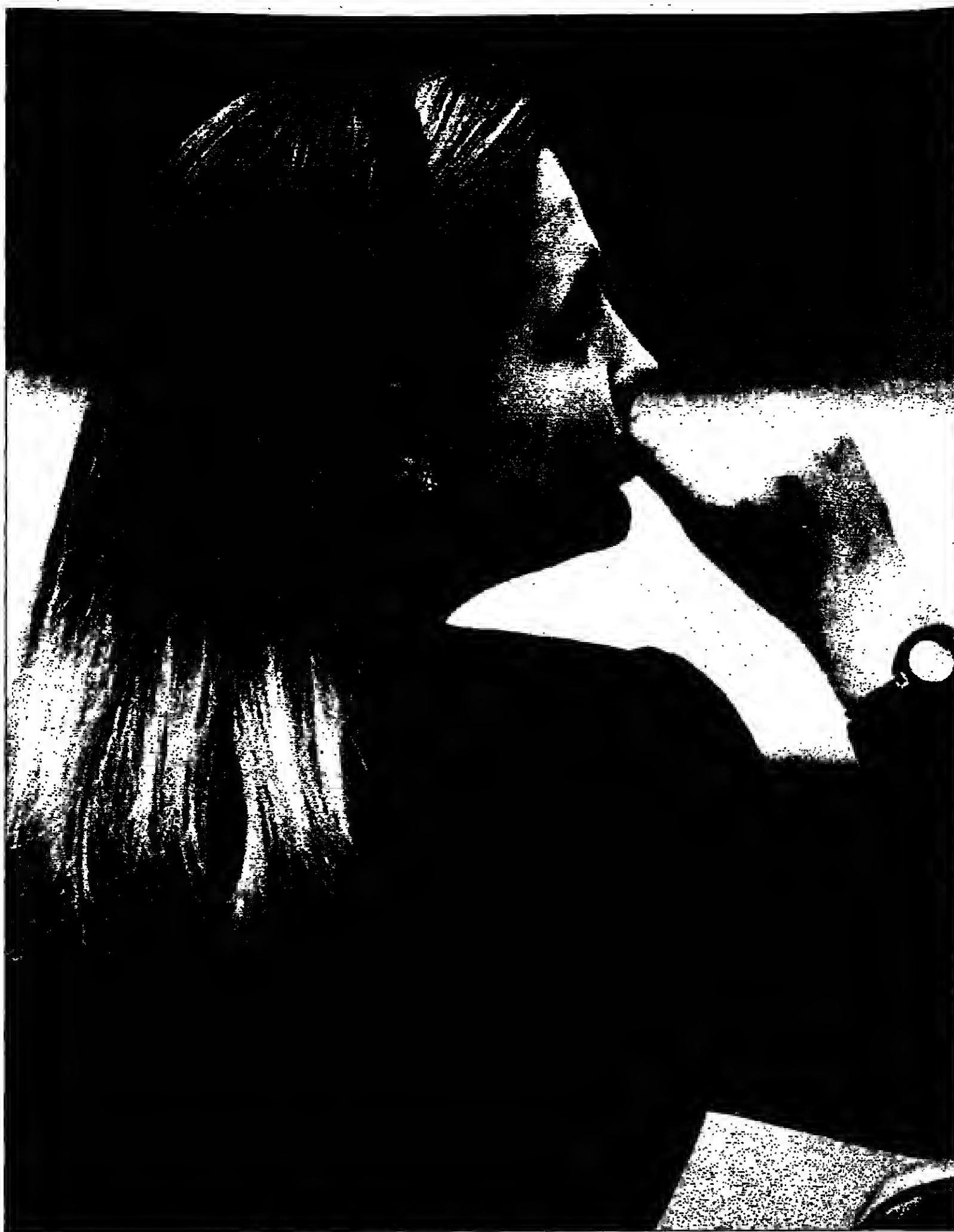
Scheck, whose role has been to offer alternative medical facts to contradict the prosecution's case, argued fiercely against putting Louise on the stand. Why take the risk, he asked his colleagues on the defence, when, on the medical evidence, they already seemed so far ahead? He felt they had had a fabulous week, bringing forward one expert after another, all with impeccable credentials, to testify that the shaking and the slamming of the victim's head, that the prosecution says occurred on 4 February, never happened.

BY DAVID
USBORNE
AND JOJO
MOYES

In spite of the intensely complex nature of some of the medical evidence, the jury had been presented with a new picture that, by Thursday, was not hard to grasp. The little boy, Matthew Eappen, had in fact, they contended, suffered an earlier, undetected, blow to the head that caused a blood clot beneath the skull, which, instead of naturally dissipating, began to re-bleed on or shortly before 4 February, causing a massive build-up of pressure on the brain, neurological collapse and, ultimately, death.

But Scheck, having lost the argument with his colleagues, could also have drawn reassurance yesterday (when, by the way, the court was dark) from the cacophony of commentary that has erupted across America's broadcast airwaves since Louise's testimony. On the cable channels that have been showing the trial live, gavel to gavel, few are the voices that dare call Louise's performance a sham. Predictions of acquittal fly with abandon; no one dares forecast a guilty verdict – or least not on the charge sought by the prosecution: first degree murder.

While, for American audiences, the nanny trial is still only a shadow of the etheric circus that the OJ Simpson trial became, it is attracting very wide coverage. Even among Britons, unused to the drama of Court TV, interest in the trial has been mounting. Sky News, which has been broadcasting the trial non-stop, said its viewing figures (normally between 50-70,000) increased "by 500-1,000 per cent" for Louise's testimony on Thursday. "We've had letters and calls talking about the case and coverage, there's a lot of interest out there, and it's building as the verdict approaches," a spokesman said. "Because of the nature of Sky we were able to clear schedules and show it live. We've been more than justified in doing that."



Waiting: Louise Woodward biting her nails on Thursday, before going into the witness box of the Massachusetts court. Photograph: Ted Fitzgerald/AP

With each passing day, the snake of satellite lorries around the 18-floor concrete courthouse gets a little longer, and the numbers of producers from the national broadcast news-magazine shows multiply. *Good Morning America*, *Primetime Live*, *Dateline NBC*. Everyone is there. Above all, they have come for Louise herself. It is very rare for defendants in murder trials to take the stand in America, thus her testimony is an instant sensation.

In addition, the American press finds fascination in the subtext about the boy's mother, Deborah Eappen. Indeed, there was outright astonishment amongst the many British broadcast reporters one night last week, when the nightly ABC news bulletin baldly told viewers that shifting the blame away from Louise towards the mother – as a person who chose to consign her children to a foreign, teenage, stranger

in favour of her medical career – had become the main thrust of the defence strategy. Not so.

Through all the three weeks so far, relations between American and British reporters have been mutually suspicious. We were perceived as having smeared the American justice system as unfair and automatically biased against Louise; we saw cause to accuse some of them of skewing coverage unfairly against the "baby-killer" nanny.

The tensions briefly revealed themselves after court closed on Thursday. A producer for the ITV documentary series *The Big Story*, who has mysteriously appointed himself protector to the Woodwards, took exception to the American TV reporters who pounced upon the family as they left the court building. He told the Americans to back off and implied that while he was

a serious "investigative" reporter, they assuredly were not. Whereupon an American network cameraman invited the Brit to repeat what he had just said, on camera, and risk having said equipment inserted where it would hurt.

Mostly it is about semantics. Louise seemed "cool" and "calculating" in court to American reporters. To us, she was "stoic" or "composed". Beginning a radio bulletin on Thursday, one US correspondent began, "At last, Louise Woodward has shown some emotion..."

The cultural divide also finds its way occasionally into the court itself.

There was general bafflement on Thursday, for example, when Louise tried to describe a baby vest she had put on the victim as a garment that closed around the crotch with "poppers". Poppers here imply a widely available recreational drug.

The right word was snaps, but Louise could not find it.

The question being widely asked is whether the jury might confuse the so-called "Britishness" of Louise, her reserve and her relative disdain for in-court emotion, with stone-heartedness. Its members, however, are a sophisticated bunch from one of the most savvy cities of the nation. Probably, they will have no trouble telling the difference.

In Louise's home town of Elton, in Cheshire, there has never been any doubt. The vast majority of locals have always been convinced of her innocence; this week, they believe that view has become more widespread.

Frank Jones is the father of one of Louise's friends, Linsey. He said yesterday that the mood there, where locals had been glued to their televisions, had definitely

picked up, following Louise's testimony. "It's definitely changed a bit this week. But then it always looks black when the prosecution outline their case, just as it always looks better when the defence makes theirs, doesn't it?" he said. "We're cautiously optimistic, but then most people thought she was innocent here anyway."

Friends of the Woodwards have set up an appeal fund, to help finance Sue Woodward's stay in Boston, and Louise's reverse-charge phone calls home. By yesterday they had raised more than £13,000, and cheques are still coming in. Sandra McCabe, one of those helping with the fund, said it had come about because "from day one we never for one minute ever faltered in our belief that Louise was innocent."

"We saw those first images of Louise, dragged out of the van in chains – it was shocking to think it was someone we knew. You see, we were all young couples who moved in at the same time, and we watched these children grow up – everyone knows everyone. You watch out for other people's children, even if you only know them by sight."

Despite the extraordinary situation in which they find themselves, support for the Woodwards has a peculiarly English tone. It is all a long way from the heated courtrooms of Cambridge, Massachusetts. They have held car-boot sales, talent nights in the local pub, and the owner of a local business has shaved his head for charity.

"We've had a gentleman, George, writing every week from Sussex; he sends a cheque for £20. There are lots of envelopes from people just saying they're praying for Louise. It has surprised us because in the beginning it was more or less just a village thing," Mrs McCabe said. "Some friends of Sue's in the next village did a casino night and Ladbroke's did a free race-night for us in July. The response has been 99 per cent positive."

A 24-hour, 7-day prayer hot-line has been set up so that someone, throughout the village and the surrounding area, is always praying for Louise. A businessman has donated T-shirts printed with the words: "The Woodward Appeal: To all caring and compassionate people." Unexpected support has come from two members of the Royal Family, who wrote to say that they were monitoring the case.

The village, says Sandra McCabe, is anxiously watching the television in the run-up to Tuesday, the expected date of the verdict. "But myself and the others, we've been optimistic from the beginning," she said yesterday. "All we wanted was that she got a fair trial, and it looks like she's getting one." Whatever the result, she says, Louise's ordeal has had an unexpected impact on village life. "I've lived here for 27 years and there's people you don't know, but you nod at when you see them in the shop. Now we don't nod at each other, we stop and talk," she said.

Stephen Jakobi, of the organisation Fair Trials Abroad, has been advising Louise's parents since her arrest. He is unsurprised by the apparent swing in public opinion. "I'm glad in many ways that Louise was put in the box. It gives her the chance to say her piece, and it's very important for her so that she dispels any lingering doubt about herself, particularly that she loved that baby... No one watching her testimony could have doubted her sincerity," he said.

If the trial had taken place in Britain, says Mr Jakobi, who is also convinced of Louise's innocence, it might well have been thrown out by now. "I'm really quite surprised that the case hasn't been stopped. A British judge might well have ruled that there wasn't a reasonable case for the jury to convict. The first-degree murder charge is still a mind-boggling thing."

Maybe Mr Scheck is just naturally cautious. He may not know it but on one phone-in show on MSNBC, in which *The Independent* was a participant, an instant polling of viewers found that only 53 per cent saw grounds for reasonable doubt while 47 per cent still considered Louise guilty. It is also true that the really tough questioning of Louise under cross-examination from the prosecution is still to come.

Tune in on Monday.

The odd pretender to the crown of Marco Polo

Did a Jewish-Italian merchant travel through China four years before Marco Polo and write up his adventures in a racy, spicy, moralising manuscript hidden from view for 700 years? Or is the world of historical research about to consume the most lavish portion of egg-on-face since "The Hitler Diaries" fiasco? Whatever the outcome of the complex row that now surrounds it, David Selbourne's new edition of *The City of Light* by one Jacob d'Ancona has reminded all the warring parties that not everything written or printed on paper unquestionably counts as gospel truth. But perhaps every reader of the British press knew that already.

Selbourne, a prolific historian and political philosopher who himself travelled in China during his youthful Maoist days, is the son of an idealistic Salford GP and grandson of the great rabbinical thinker Moshe Avigdor Amiel. For two decades, he taught at Ruskin College, Oxford, the union-supported foundation, but became disenchanted by his increasingly bitter battles with the hard left.

Disgusted with British political and academic life, Selbourne moved to Urbino in central Italy. Three years ago, he anticipated many of Tony Blair's headline

themes in his book *The Principle of Duty*. Placing its stress on responsibility instead of unearned rights, this gnomic tract advocated a "social-ism" that would place obligations on corporate fat-cats and benefit-seekers alike.

By that time, he says, he had already come across a late 13th-century manuscript in private hands: 280 pages in vernacular Italian with Hebrew elements, written on paper – still a novelty in Europe around 1280 – and bound in frayed vellum. It appears to be the record of Jacob d'Ancona's three-year trip around India and Indo-China to Zaitun (now Quanzhou), a sophisticated but demoralised "City of Light" on the South China coast. Jacob arrived in Zaitun in 1271; Marco Polo reached Xanadu in 1275.

Jacob's tale (lavishly published by Little, Brown) reveals some uncanny parallels between public debates in late-Song China, then under threat from Mongol invaders, and late-1990s Britain. The businesslike but leisure-loving citizens of Zaitun chew over questions familiar to us – about community and individualism, the morality of the marketplace, teenage sex, the role of disparate faiths in a unified state. Jacob d'Ancona and David

Selbourne certainly make a marriage of true minds. Selbourne claims that "There is very little in his manuscript that does not address today's problems, showing how perennial they are."

He professes himself satisfied with Jacob's *bona fides*: "The accuracy of his record is on the whole impressive". Other specialists are not so sure. The oriental scholar and novelist Robert Irwin tentatively raised the possibility that Selbourne was hoaxed. Now, in the *London Review of Books*, the eminent Sinologist T H Barrett of London University argues that *The City of Light* is a modern forgery.

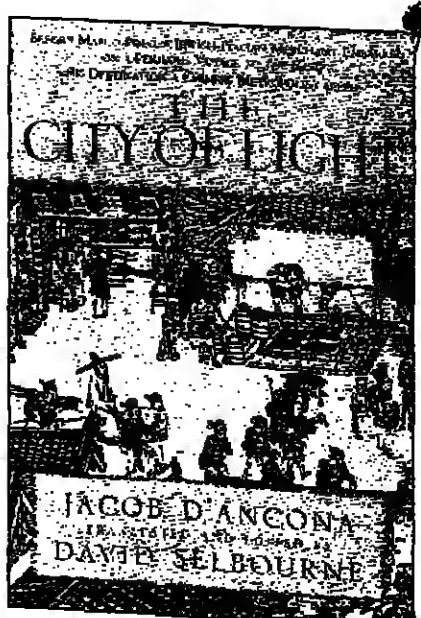
Barrett thinks it peppered with anachronisms about the life and customs of the period, and with characters that crop up in no other Chinese source. Jacob meets graduates holding kinds of degrees that (according to Barrett) did not then exist. He reports a scholar using the word "Hui" for Muslims, although the term, Barrett alleges, did not come into use until after 1348. Jacob writes about the decay of religious faith when the weight of evidence suggests a thriving popular piety. And he describes Zaitun as a sort of free port; in fact, the local ruler, Pu Shoueng, kept a firm grip on customs revenues.

"It is hard enough nowadays to get our children and students to do their homework," laments Barrett, "so when even our forgers turn out to be unacceptably indolent, there can be little hope for education". For scholars, the unavailability of the original manuscript – still secreted with its owner in the Marche region of Italy, with not even a single page photographically reproduced in the new edition – has clearly set alarm-bells ringing.

Barrett also raises the question of why Little, Brown has such total confidence in Jacob's authenticity. In fact, Little, Brown did remove about 20 per cent of Jacob's text. Philippa Harrison, the chief executive and publisher of Little, Brown, reports that "generalists such as Robyn Davidson and Paul Theroux have been awed by the book. Sinologists divided and dubious, and nobody has published any reactions from Jewish or medieval Italian scholars."

Selbourne is reported to be "dismayed" by the quarrel. A showdown must come soon. Will Marco Polo hang on to his status as the first recorded European China hand?

— Boyd Tonkin, Literary Editor



Degree of doubt: the book is alleged to be peppered with anachronisms

A widow robbed of her weeds

Franz Lehár's 'Merry Widow' usually comes dressed to kill. So why, asks Edward Seckerson, has the Royal Opera stripped her bare?

She's not always been treated with respect, it's true. Over the years, we've tended to take her charms for granted, cheapening her reputation, undermining her sophistication, turning her into rather too much of a good-time girl. But at least Lehár's 'Widow' was merry, captivating, exuberant, and always - always - looked good for her money.

Graham Vick's new production for the Royal Opera at the Shaftesbury Theatre is one of those things. In his well-intentioned attempts to rediscover her, to "understand" her (heaven forbid), to recapture something of her elusive appeal, to return us to that state of grace where she's no longer merely the mother of reprises, a good turn to be had by all (that naughty word "operetta" is to blame), he's left her flat, bereft. In short, she's been robbed.

Of her décor, for starters. Vick and his designer, Richard Hudson, have reverted (characteristically) to the "blank canvas" look. Well, not entirely blank. A series of canvases, as often as not bearing little more than a single brush stroke - the merest suggestion of a drape, a staircase, a mounted hussar, a lady's hand, a crescent moon - mark out time and place. But essentially Hudson's minimalistically chic setting amounts to an empty violet-blue box.

Empty being the operative word. For I can honestly say that I've never seen a Graham Vick production that was physically, dramatically, quite so inexplicably impoverished. Presumably his intention was to strip away the window-dressing and clear the dance floor for this night of wine, women and *liederslieder*. Yet, by Vick standards (and those of his choreographic "tsar" Ron Howell), movement and blocking are at best rudimentary, at worst cumbersome - conspicuously lacking in either eroticism or wit. By far the best visual gag of the evening is in place before the front cloth (a rather cheeky allusion to the distinctive Royal Opera House curtains) has even risen - and that's a row of white-gloved hands serving as footlights.

And so it comes to pass that Hanna Glawari (the 'Merry Widow' herself) makes her much-vaunted arrival (the operetta equivalent of *Der Rosenkavalier*'s "Presentation of the Rose") way downstage through what might just as well be the tradesmen's entrance. Or is this cramping of her style



Felicity Lott's Hanna may be short on glamour but she can still float a B that goes on for ever. *Laure Lewis*

a deliberate ploy to remind us of her "common" stock. At any rate, it's a messy business, with male admirers buzzing around the proverbial honey-pot in such a way as to draw attention to the awkwardness of both the space and the blocking. You really don't expect to be taking Vick (or Howell) to task on matters of basic stagecraft.

So what of the play? Surely that's the thing. Remember, we're talking here of a producer who made even the dialogue in Beethoven's *Fidelio* work

Well, we've a cracking new translation from Jeremy Sams - that's as good a headstart as you could hope for these days. Anyone who can make a rhyme of "chanteuses" and "flooies", who can underline the significance of a key prop - namely the "fan fatale" - so deftly, should be a joy to play. Trouble is that this is an English translation in the hands of a United Nations cast, and it doesn't matter how often you make capital of the language barrier by gently sending up the assort-

ment of accents, when the jokes aren't intelligible and/or fluently played (believe me, you could get splinters from the delivery of one or two participants here), then you have problems.

"Count Danilo speaks French like a pig," exclaims Claudio Desderi's Baron Zeta in a pigeon-English verging on self-parody. It's funny to begin with, but hold on, there's a whole lot of dialogue in this show.

A couple of years back, Tom Stoppard devised a narration for concert

performances of the *Widow* in which the "minor" character of Njegus, clerk at the Pontevedrian Embassy, declared himself the driving force of the entire piece. David Ross, who plays him here with timing as sure as his Yorkshire accent is broad, almost succeeds in turning Stoppard's contentious joke into a reality.

Almost, but not quite. Thank heavens for the dashing Count Danilo? That rather depends on how much time has elapsed since he and Hanna first met. But he's still the sexiest and most charismatic thing on the stage. When he and Felicity Lott's widow are one-to-one (and their close encounters with the waltz are still the highlights of the evening), we can sit back and enjoy the endearing spectacle of two old stagers who don't take themselves too seriously but who instinctively know the meaning of bitterness, regret, second chances. They spar charmingly. ("Perhaps you ought to charge," suggests Hanna, with reference to his hussar's attire. "I'd make a fortune," he counters.)

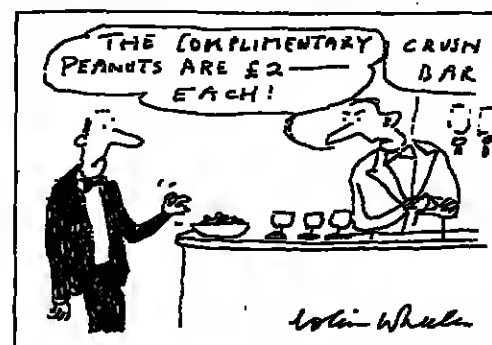
Vocally, Lott still makes a lovely sound, even if the joins are now rather too audible. She can still place the closing phrases of "Vilja" like she never wants to let go of them, and still manage a floated B natural that goes on for ever. For Allen, too, Danilo sits comfortably, suavely, in the best-preserved part of his voice. Together they shame their young counterparts, Juliette Galstian's Valenciennne and Luca Canonici's Camille de Rosillon, both of whom lack their ease, style, vocal enticement. These tunes need singing, really singing. You surrender to them or they pass you by.

Rather like this production. Who'd have thought that Graham Vick would find his nemesis in Franz Lehár? Still, as Dietfried Berner fair licked into the prelude with the promise of a vitality that was never to materialise on stage, it was at least reassuring to know that the Royal Opera had got the venue right, that Lehár's *Merry Widow* belonged in a theatre such as this (remember, the *Widow*'s London coming-out was at the Palladium). Its modest pit-sized band sounded well in the Shaftesbury, with first-deck violins sweetly redolent of another time, another place. A faded glamour. And just when you were thinking that the whole evening was on the floor, never to pick itself up, along came that most insidiously memorable of waltzes to take hold of the senses where words and actions had failed.

To 11 Nov, then 31 Dec and 1-10 Jan (with three alternate casts) at the Shaftesbury Theatre (corner of Shaftesbury Ave and High Holborn), London WC2. Booking: 0171-304 4000

A WEEK IN THE ARTS DAVID LISTER

I once asked Baroness Datta O'Cathain, when she was head of the Barbican Centre, what she considered her greatest achievement in arts administration. "I changed the canteens," she replied. At the time I regarded this as outrageous philistinism but, increasingly, I'm beginning to think she had her priorities right. Last Monday, at the David Helfgott concert at the Royal Albert Hall, I had a snack in the Hall's restaurant. Two slices of bread with a small piece of smoked salmon on each cost well over £6, as did a half bottle of house plonk. With neither pub



nor wine bar in walking distance of the Hall, the RAH has a captive audience. I've since asked some of the promoters who use the Hall what they think of these prices, and they admit they are unaware of them: they only eat and drink at the heavily subsidised artists' bar. In fact, few theatre directors, I've found, know the cost of an interval drink or ice cream at their venues. Yet poor or expensive service there can colour a whole evening. I would be interested to hear from readers of their experiences of catering abuse at theatres and concert halls. The guilty directors who advocate arts for the people, then charge the people through the nose for a half-time snack, will be duly shamed.

The claim by National Gallery director Neil MacGregor that Renoir's *Les Parapluies* may be the first "politically correct" painting, after X-ray work showed that the artist altered it over the years to include what can be interpreted as a scene of sexual harassment, has provoked a number of you to write in after I reported MacGregor's theory on the front of *The Eye*. A number of you suggest that the "guilty" man is in fact leaning not at the uncomfortable-looking woman in front of him but at the little girl on the opposite side of the canvas, making this the first paedophile painting. But the majority take the cynical view that this is the National Gallery taking liberties with Renoir to drum up publicity for MacGregor's excellent BBC2 series *Making Masterpieces* (which continues on Monday at 7.30pm). One woman wrote in French, claiming to be the lady in the painting and signing herself "Mimi", although the Norwich postmark casts considerable doubt on her authenticity. Still, her explanation for the cause of her discomfort - namely that she alone, of all the people in the picture, isn't carrying an umbrella - sounds to me highly plausible, if disappointingly unpolitical.

This week's reports of the British Museum's exciting new development scheme left out one factor the BM is keeping rather quiet, perhaps fearful of a staff uprising: it is to ban car parking from the forecourt. This can be chalked up as a victory for *The Independent's* campaign to clear cars from cultural spaces, and can be added to Horseguards Parade and (shortly) the Royal Academy and Courtauld Institute. When I first asked the BM about this three years ago, the response was that it was impossible for staff to find alternative parking spaces. Thankfully, the impossible is achievable, even if it does take a few years.

THEATRE

Patrick Marber's 'Closer' has transferred to the Lyttelton after a sell-out season in the Cottesloe. Paul Taylor wonders what all the fuss is about

When Patrick Marber woke up to the reviews for his second play, *Closer*, last May, he must have wondered whether (a) he had died and gone to Heaven or (b) he was the victim of some widespread hoax. "He has written one of the best plays of sexual politics in the language," proclaimed one critic. "It is right up there with Williams' *Sweetcar*, Mamet's

Glenn, Albee's Virginia Woolf, Pinter's *Old Times* and Hare's *Skyline*."

Nothing if not well-intentioned, that's the sort of review that could lead both to howling writer's block for the lucky recipient and to keen disappointment for audiences primed to arrive with unreasonable expectations. Seeing *Closer* for the first time now in its semi-recast transfer from the Cottesloe to the Lyttelton, I sincerely hope I am reacting to the play rather than to the hype, but I am afraid I struck me as a piece of human algebra - albeit technically brilliant - and as the kind of "scaring" male lowdown on the awfulness of men that wins rather more moral Brownie points for courageous self-exposure than it actually deserves.

An erotic square-dance to the music of

time (three and half years of it). *Closer* trains its narrow, stifling focus on a foursome whose occupations offer too little resistance to the play's preoccupations. There's a waltz-like stripper who gets stripped of her life by a newspaper columnist and would-be creative writer when he puts her experiences in his first book. There's a male dermatologist and a female photographer, mechanically well placed, by their line of work, to introduce issues like exposure and the link between surface and psychic scars.

Calculated to within an inch of its mannered, staccato Pinter-ish life, the play does not discover its vision of the world and of heterosexual relations from these characters. It imposes an *a priori* vision upon them. The most celebrated scene in the play is the

blackly comic, silent one in which Mark Strong's Dan, the obituarist, after being rebuffed by the photographer, gets his revenge by posing as a slutish, nympho version of her on the internet and engaging in pornographic cybersex fantasies with the tumbler dermatologist, Larry (Neil Dudgeon).

Well, call me griggish, but I could never have mistaken the hilarious film that pours from the busy fingers of Dan here as the work of a woman (e-mail from women putting me right about that will be gratefully received). OK, arousal can dampen your literary critical faculties; on the other hand, I believe that Marber's priority here - to show how women are significantly absent in this most skewed but most successful exchange of intimacies in

the play - has perhaps led him to underestimate the Larrys of this world.

Marber makes dutiful efforts to show that the women (played by Sally Dexter and Lisa Walker) are far from beyond reproach, but his heart is in exposing the men and the sexual insecurity that leads to their bullying, sadomasochist need to know the anatomical facts (as opposed to the truth) about their partners' infidelities. "If women saw one minute of our home movies, the shit that slops through our mind every day... they'd string us up by our balls," opines Larry. Fair enough, but often the mean-spiritedness of the male characters is in danger of overflowing into Marber's treatment of them.

To an artificial degree, the play is lacking in dramatic situations that would re-

ally put the various definitions of love to the test. There's an implied contrast in the piece between Dan and his hopeless novel ("Why won't he write something that will hurt him? He won't go near himself") and Marber and the painfully self-implicating *Closer*. But I detect a faint odour of sanctimony. After all, a man who points out that men are shits is not in a morally high-risk position these days. The men are both nicer and worth more than they get credit for being here. Marber has enormous ability and must not allow the adulation he has received for this play to deflect him from the genuinely dangerous material he is perhaps uniquely equipped to tackle.

In repertoire at the Lyttelton Theatre, RNT. Booking: 0171-928 2252

THE WEEK IN REVIEW DAVID BENEDICT

THE PLAY

A Delicate Balance

Edward Albee's 1966, elegant, elusive family drama with a wintery, Pinter flavour of nameless threat is directed by Anthony Page. Eileen Atkins and Maggie Smith as sisters head a classy cast. Theatre Royal, Haymarket (0171-930 8800)

Paul Taylor loved it. "Eileen Atkins is the refined fort and Maggie Smith the raffish loose cannon in Anthony Page's wonderful staging... one of Albee's main claims to classic status." "A tremendous evening, and a metaphorical version of all our unspoken arguments," sang the *Mail*. "Page's lucid production generally lacks the emotional intensity of the 1996 American production... one of the most disturbing dark comedies of our time," proclaimed the *Standard*. "Six excellent actors find themselves in a pickle," opined the *FT*. "A hollowly rhetorical second-rate play... this production flatters it magnificently," declared the *Telegraph*. "Albee's sinewy play, rich in social and political meaning, survives a production clearly in thrall to the clamorous Dame Maggie," revealed the *Guardian*.

The accents are execrable but the play finally finds its balance. James Laurensen is superb.



THE OPERA

From the House of the Dead

Tim Albery directs Janacek's final opera, a prison drama conducted by Paul Daniel, preceded by *Twice Through the Heart*, Mark-Anthony Turnage's setting of Jackie Kay's poem. In rep at ENO, The Coliseum, London WC2 (0171-632 8300)

Edward Seckerson was enthralled. "Suffused by a surreal glow... This is an ENO special in terms of its company spirit, its collective energy and focus... unquenchable lyricism straining for release." "Janacek's most extraordinary score. Paul Daniel conducts it at white-heat and encourages both his orchestra and the men of the ENO chorus to believe in it too," saluted the *Guardian*. "One of ENO's best achievements... a triumph for Paul Daniel... a welcome reminder of Tim Albery's exceptional gifts," gloried the *FT*. "The best evening I've had at English National Opera for years," cried the *Telegraph*. "Individual star performances... Whoever had the idea of performing *Twice Through the Heart* as a curtain-raiser deserves a medal," cheered the *Times*.

A low-key, high-definition production of a masterpiece.



THE FILM

A Life Less Ordinary

Director Danny Boyle, producer Andrew Macdonald and screenwriter John Hodge abandon *Trainspotting* for romantic comedy complete with angelic intervention. Ewan McGregor and Cameron Diaz star. Cert 15, 103 mins. On general release.

Adam Mars-Jones thought that "McGregor is very good but perhaps the screenplay is a little self-conscious in its own innocence." "Plays on the cusp of thriller and fantasy... Better than either of the trio's previous films if more flawed," averred the *Telegraph*. "Grown-up, sassy, charming and cheeky," grinned *The Express*. "Brilliant, deranged heart-melting," screamed *Sky Magazine*. "This sprawling, uneven, impossible-to-dislike movie," wobbled the *Guardian*. "Our hearts are not with these characters, which makes the film's twists, turns and elongations increasingly difficult to take," sighed the *Times*. "Nothing is as embarrassing as a cute ending to a romantic comedy gone wrong," warned the *FT*. "Quite a misfire... The Coen Brothers meet Frank Capra... it's a mismatch made in heaven," winced *Time Out*.

Not up there with *Bringing Up Baby*, but nor does it lurk with the likes of *For Pete's Sake*.



THE WEEK ON RADIO ROBERT HANKS

Nation shall speak unto nation, but only if it's in RP

Microphones are dangerous objects. You take a risk putting anybody in front of one, even a hardened professional - that just makes it a more calculated risk. Mouths shoot off in all directions, words can take on a life of their own - nouns try to be verbs, names shift themselves uneasily; the word you're looking for goes missing, and another one you didn't mean jumps into its place. And - bingo! - before you know it, "the batsman's Holding, the bowler's Willey" or some such, and you're heading for immortality as a radio blooper.

So you can sympathise with Lord Reith, founder of the BBC, who in 1924, so we learnt from *What You Say Delights Me* (Radio 4, Saturday), declared that being in front of a microphone was a privilege to be granted only to those who had something special to say. Jeannette Thomas's feature, broadcast as part of the BBC's 75th anniversary celebrations, took the opposite view, however - casting Reith as the villain, and the Common Man and Woman as heroes, struggling to make themselves heard. The title came from a classic cross-class confrontation, recorded in 1952, which was used to set the tone for the programme. A lady with decidedly received pronunciation was interviewing an elderly, and

slightly deaf, man about the delights of Timbridge Wells: "It must be healthy for you to be looking so wonderful at this age," she coaxed. "Well," he returned, testily, "why shouldn't I look wonderful?" "That, of course, comes from the inner spirit, I know," she said, trying hard to retrieve some *bonhomie*. Here he turned to pleading: "I don't know what you want me to say. If I can say anything to please you I will, but..." The RP lady jumped in: "Oh, what you're saying delights me."

There were plenty of other instances of this uneasy condescension scattered throughout the programme - of working people treated like zoological specimens by middle-class broadcasters convinced they were addressing other middle-class people - and Andy Kershaw, the presenter, worked himself into a fine old lather about it. I couldn't quell a sense of uneasiness towards the end of the programme, as we reached the phone-in age, when the script seemed to suggest that screening callers was somehow undemocratic - that access ought to be unrestricted. That way lies Talk Radio, Nicky Campbell on Radio 5 and other, even cheaper and nastier, kinds of madness.

All the same, it was a very fine pro-

gramme, a reminder that the BBC isn't a dear old auntie: for much of its existence it's been a Victorian paterfamilias, and really not at all lovable. On the other hand, how many other institutions would allow themselves to be so thoroughly rubbishised as part of their birthday celebrations?

Other sorts of exclusion were examined in one of the other anniversary items - *Under the Loofah Tree* (R4, Saturday). Giles Cooper's 1958 play about a man spending the morning in his bathtub. It's a sort of *Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, but darker - Edward Thwaite's dreams aren't so much a way of escaping his dull, responsible adult life as a different sort of cage: when he appears on a *This Is Your Life*-style programme, his mother returns from the dead to complain about the trouble she had with him and moan that she wants to be alive; other guests don't remember him at all.

The play shows a brilliant understanding of how radio can work - Cooper used the strange intimacy of the medium to create a queasily familiar, solipsistic world. But solipsism is the condition radio is always nudging towards - something to be fought against, not exploited and encouraged. So, a classic, I grant you; but, like so many classics, to be admired from a distance.

The British (at last) get a new weapon against the state



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The incorporation into British law of the European Convention on Human Rights is a progressive step. It is, or ought to be, an instalment in a wider programme of bringing Britain's governing institutions up to date. If Margaret Thatcher's decade saw much-needed modernisation of the British economy - New Labour does not dispute that - then the Blair decade (if that is what he is going to get) ought to be about complementary modernisation of our democracy.

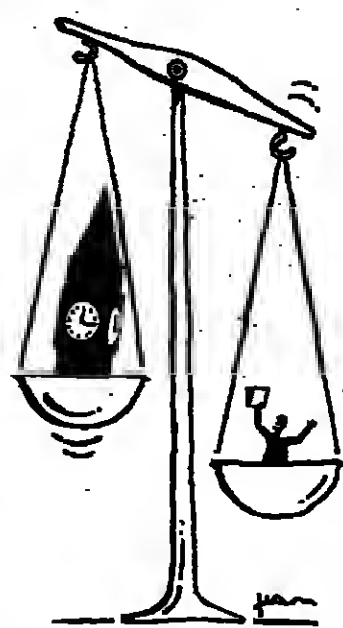
Its bullet points are obvious: electoral reform, reformation of Parliament, the transfer of decision-making closer to people by means of devolution. High on that list is arming British judges with a tool for better balancing the rights of individuals taxed, regulated and policed by the state.

The European Convention has long been accepted as a reasonable statement of those rights. More often cited than read, it is worthy, ambiguous and showing its age. British courts have already gone a long way in adopting its spirit. Yet its incorporation in the law of this land, if nothing else, saves litigants the delay and cost of a journey to Alsace. What the Government is offering is economical and simplifying. It is also slightly risky, depending as it does on the cleverness and

the caution of judges. With it, however, Labour redeems a central election promise. This is progress.

Yesterday's White Paper is a neat exhibition of what is emerging as Jack Straw's political character: he is a liberal dressed in conservative clothing. It is imaginatively drafted. Are the Tories really going to oppose a measure which identifies the impeccably Conservative Lord Kilmuir as its ultimate author? Constitutional radicals may express disappointment that British judges are not going to be empowered to "strike down" all British law found to contravene rights as stated in the convention - though they will get power to override what is called secondary legislation, such as benefit rules and police regulations. But the Government is wise to steer clear of such a radical transfer of political power to the judiciary.

That phrase "strike down" is an American import. In the United States, judges have 220 years of history and convention to draw on, let alone a stout constitution of which they are the acknowledged custodians. British conditions are incomparable. Judges simply do not possess the social, political or cultural presence to become legislators. Parliament is an imperfect instrument of representative government, to be sure: for operational



purposes it too often means the will of a party majority expressed in the House of Commons. Accountability is not a television. Yet we still receive a letter every year from these disbelieving pests stating that their records show we do not have a TV licence.

bound to the text of a document couched in the language of rights, can aspire to. The White Paper formula will allow judges confronting a disparity between the law and rights to make a declaration. Ministers will be obliged to open a "fast track" for remedial legislation. This sounds like a wise compromise. Here is a power to mix it in the public sphere which the senior judiciary will use with the greatest of care. But for their part, ministers will be obliged to look sharp when their law is found wanting.

The culture of the European Convention is essentially individualist, suspicious of the powers of the state. In its light police officers, taxmen, councils, Whitehall departments are all potential aggressors. This, of course, chimes with the British mood - which makes it all the more paradoxical that the United Kingdom should have been first to ratify the convention and just about last to incorporate it into domestic law. Now, individuals acquire a powerful weapon for struggles with the state to come.

Yet the fair operations of the state depend on a two-way flow of rights and responsibilities. Incorporation must not become an occasion for whingeing to be constitutionally enfranchised. Human rights actions should not be part of the

culture of complaint. For this reason, the Government - though it couches its reasons in terms of public spending - is right to resist the creation of a new organ of state in the form of a human rights commission, to assist people to mount cases. This belongs in the private sphere. There is nothing stopping business or individuals contributing towards the cost of a not-for-profit human rights body.

Human rights are not, ultimately, for the courts but for the political arena. The White Paper does not say this, but perhaps in the course of debate ministers will, even if it rebounds on them. The main stage for adjusting the boundary between state and individual has to be democratic politics. It is through the election of representatives, locally as well as centrally, that we get the chance to design systems of public service which do not abuse citizens, which contain within them ways in which complaints and grievances are handled and resolved. Going to the courts for redress is evidence of the state's failure. Incorporation of the convention ought, first and foremost, to mean that civil servants, council officials, police officers and ministers carry out their jobs more acutely conscious of proper procedure and the rights of those they are meant to serve.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Islamic vs secular

Sir: Nothing is as likely to expose the hypocrisy of liberal secularism as the subject of Muslim schools, and in her article "In defence of Islamophobia" (23 October), Polly Toynbee doesn't let us down. Her anger is far from rational.

She suggests that Britain follows the United States: forbid religion in schools and communities will not be "marginalised". To disagree is to be irrational. And yet, American society is fragmented in many ways, not least of which are the secular/religious and inter-religious divides. Such divisions need not be damaging. They can celebrate the diversity of culture within multi-cultural societies. To force all children into secular schools against the wishes of their parents denies multi-culturalism and places Ms Toynbee alongside the Tenth of the world.

Legislation in this and other countries allows educational pluralism which caters for all: it is popular with parents and academically successful. Denying Muslim parents the choice enjoyed by others - or any parents any choice at all - is unacceptable discrimination promoting a secularised and spiritually diminished society.

Polly Toynbee is actually an argument against genuine liberal values. In this democratic society, I have to accept that Polly Toynbee is proud to be an "Islamophobe" ... a Christophobe and an all-round "religiophobe". But do us all a favour, Polly, in future "bigot" will suffice.

IBRAHIM HEWITT
Development Officer
Association of Muslim Schools
of United Kingdom and Eire
Leicester

Sir: Polly Toynbee points to countries where Islam is the main faith to justify her intolerance. There are many brutal and oppressive secular states in the world, but we do not use that as an excuse to treat secularists in Britain unjustly.

The victims of Islamophobia are some of the most vulnerable members of society. Yet, as the report on Islamophobia clearly shows, they are not adequately protected by current legislation. Islamophobia means exclusion, discrimination, prejudice and violence. And Polly Toynbee is content to call herself an Islamophobe? MUHAMMAD USAMAH
Education Officer
The Muslim Educational Trust
London N4

Sir: Polly Toynbee States that Islam is "a religion that describes women as of inferior status". Islam describes women as different: woman is the perfect partner and balance for man, and vice versa; we are neither superior nor inferior, and of equal measure to men in the sight of God, being the recipient of fair and equal measures of mercy and also bearing the same religious responsibilities. As for her feelings against



Girls in a British Islamic school, learning 'solid morals with discipline and respect'

Photograph: Tom Pilton

Muslim schools, what choice does a Muslim mother have? Do I, as an English Muslim, send my children to a secular school where they may be bullied, where there is no respect for authority, they may get killed, they will encounter drugs, alcohol and pre-marital sex?

Which Muslim mother wouldn't send her child to the safe haven of an Islamic school? In such schools solid morals are taught with discipline and respect. This may sound dull and dictatorial to the likes of Polly Toynbee, but we prefer it.

SARAH MOORE
Leicester

Sir: Polly Toynbee is wrong in claiming that British Muslims are covered by existing race relations legislation. If she were to convert to Islam (you never know), and be banned by Andrew Marr from wearing a headscarf in Canary Wharf, she would have no recourse to law. A young Asian woman might be successful in arguing in court that the headscarf is a custom of Pakistan, where her parents came from. Polly Toynbee would have to rely on Robert Fisk putting in a good word with the boss.

Professor GORDON CONWAY
Vice-Chancellor
University of Sussex
Brighton

The writer is chair of the Runnymede Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia

Sir: No legislation will do for the UK Muslim community what it must do for itself. By steadfastly refusing to publicly condemn actions of Muslim states that contravene basic British values, it has - by default - become identified with them.

Had UK Muslims criticised extremist behavior such as the absurd *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie their acceptance in to

the community would not have been in question.
TONY FREEMAN
London W1

Sir: Jack Straw is to be congratulated on resisting demands to introduce legislation to protect Muslims from religious discrimination (report, 23 October). It is to be hoped that he will finally turn down requests for state support for Islamic schools too.

Having seen the way that sectarian education has reinforced intercommunal violence in Northern Ireland, he should be looking at ways to reduce support for Christian schools, rather than widening the scope of subsidised religious denominational indoctrination.

The excellent Comment by Polly Toynbee raises issues to which the government should now be giving the most serious consideration.

ERIC THOMPSON
London NW2

Sir: I found myself agreeing with Polly Toynbee, not because I am an Islamophobe, but in her insistence that a law against religious discrimination would stifle debate about religion and free speech.

But is Ms Toynbee's argument that you can only judge a religion by the worst of its followers rational? I cannot speak for Islam, but Christianity itself has not caused the problems in Northern Ireland. How could a faith that demands we love our enemies and turn the other cheek do that? Behaviour that contradicts these principles is sub-Christian, whatever the perpetrators of such behaviour call themselves.

Does Ms Toynbee hold the

same principle to be true of atheists? Is the only true atheist a bad one? I suppose that Stalinist Russia or atheistic Albania - dull, intolerant, murderous regimes - are the standards by which we must view Polly Toynbee's rationalist vision for Britain.

The Rev GUY A. DAVIES
Stalbridge, Dorset

Silence on schools

Sir: It is good to see an authoritative columnist like Donald Macintyre taking up a subject - the private-state schism in our education (22 October) - which most politicians and commentators are too uncomprehending, too unimaginative, or too embarrassed by the contradiction between their championship of comprehensives and their choice of school for their own children to write about.

The education minister Stephen Byers recently said that the problem of our schools was not confined to a few underperformers: it was the mediocrity of the entire state system. While we have two distinct educational philosophies - one grimly egalitarian, the other competitive and aspiring - mediocre it will remain.

Critics of my own solution say that for the state to pay the costs of private schools in return for opening them to all the talents would be too expensive. I have never proposed this. Given the likelihood that the children of middle-class parents would continue to predominate, it would be unrealistic. Once accepted, pupils would pay fees on a sliding scale, just as their parents do for university maintenance.

In my book *We Should Know*

Better I said that I would be happy to hear solutions other than my own. The response has been an evasive silence. Tossing a few apples over the wall in the form of scholarships, or allowing the educational peasantry access to the sporting facilities of their betters would do much for our social consciences, but not for our schools.

GEORGE WALDEN
London W12

Price of gay lifestyle

Sir: Thank you, Miles Kingston, for taking a small step towards facing the truth about homosexuality ("A handbagging for Oscar Wilde", 21 October). The sordid reality is indeed very different from the lofty image the gay rights movement has been promoting. The risks of a homosexual lifestyle have been hushed up, and the medical facts are truly shocking.

A 20-year-old homosexual man faces a 30 per cent chance of being HIV positive or having Aids by the time he is 30, and regular receptive homosexual intercourse carries a 30-fold increase in the risk of anal cancer [Macphail G.L. Dept of Medicine and Infectious Diseases, University of Calgary, "Alberta Report", 14 Oct 1996]. The mean age at death for homosexual males is just 57 years - compared with 75 years for married men, and a gay man is over 20 times more likely to commit suicide than others [Cameron P et al. The Longevity of Homosexuals, Omega 1994].

We don't hesitate to broadcast the risks of drinking and driving. We issue warnings about the dangers of not wearing seatbelts. We owe it to our young people to at least tell them about the risks of a homosexual lifestyle.

Dr HUGH J THOMPSON
Birmingham Heartlands Hospital
Edgbaston, Birmingham

TV licence pests

Sir: Ms B S Purcell (letter, 23 October) protests at the activity of the TV Licensing Office. We do not have a television. We have never had a television. We do not intend ever to have a television. Yet we still receive a letter every year from these disbelieving pests stating that their records show we do not have a TV licence.

Fed up after years of explaining why we don't have a TV licence, I simply binned the last letter. A little while later we received a further letter asking why we had not replied to the previous one. Next year, I'm going to bin all the letters and wait for someone to show up in person.

G P DE CESARE
Reading, Berkshire

In the pipeline

Sir: Nicholas Schoon reports ("Lead pipe poison threat to poor", 18 October) that European environment ministers "agreed this week to enforce a much tougher standard for lead in drinking water". What they have done is reached a Common Position and this must then come back to the European Parliament for a second reading. Only after that is complete will the environment ministers be in a position to agree anything.

As Parliament's rapporteur and as chairman of the relevant committees, I am sure that we will look at their recommendations with great interest, but the argument is not yet over.

KEN COLLINS MEP
(Strathclyde E. Lab)
East Kilbride

Freed prisoners

Sir: Dr John Wilkerson's comments (letter, 22 October) typify a misunderstanding about custodial sentencing. The recently released paedophile had received a sentence for manslaughter of 15 years. The length of sentence served was less than the one-third remission, in accordance with the 1967 Criminal Justice Act. The principle of remission applies to all custodial sentences, regardless of whatever repugnance people may feel over particular offences.

The episode however, further emphasises the need for supervision and treatment of convicted paedophiles once they are returned to the community.

IAN M HENDERSON
Rochester, Kent

Moment of creation

Sir: Archbishop Ussher may well have provided the most precise date for the beginning of the world ("The world is 6,000 today", 23 October). You should however recognise the contribution of Dr John Lightfoot, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, who demonstrated even greater precision. In 1642 he stated that the world began on 23 October 4004BC "at nine o'clock in the morning". BARRY LOVEDAY
University of Portsmouth

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

A great debate on the newsdesk floor on Monday evening when we were discussing using the hurt rabbit picture to accompany our story on animal testing. Some colleagues found themselves physically unable to look at the picture and argued vehemently that it didn't pass the "corollaries test" - meaning it was unacceptable over a breakfast table. Others, though, thought that if we were protesting about something, we had to show what the something was. I was of the latter view. Some of you were simply offended, but most of those who wrote in, even when they described the picture as horrible, thought we were right to use the power of shock. But the line between coarsening and informing is a thin one and easily crossed: images of human torture and death, in particular, have to be used sparingly and rarely.

Andrew Marr in porn movie scandal? I have your attention at last. *Private Eye* certainly won mine, when a cheerily insinuating bloke from that organ phoned up to ask about my involvement in a sex film ... The proverbial key hand clutches at the heart. Was it one too many lagers that night some years ago which went all blurry?

Anyway, it was all because I'd given an interview to that not-very-high-ratings outfit, Live TV, on the ethics of the "sting" against Piers Merchant, the Tory MP caught with an, er, blushing damsel who had already betrayed him with another paper. My argument was that the mixture of hypocrisy and deceit involved meant that his sex life was, in this case, relevant to his public position and Merchant had little case for successfully complaining about intrusion. *The Independent* wouldn't have used its resources chasing Mr Merchant and porn, "used" young Anna Cox as they tripped from trust to trust; but he is in a weak position to defend himself against a public interest defence.

Andrew Marr

QUOTE UNQUOTE

There has always been sex in *Coronation Street*. Elsie Tanner used to walk around in a negligé - spokeswoman for the programme

It took thousands of years for humanity to discover that water is made up of molecules. Teachers can pass that information on to children in 10 seconds. Without teachers, society would slide back into squalor well before the next century was out - Ted Wrang, Professor of Education at Exeter University

When somebody offers you a gag and invites you to tie it across your own mouth, you have no honourable choice but to refuse - Ken Coates, MEP suspended by Labour for refusing to sign a rule forbidding criticism of party policy

We should put the spin-doctors in spin clinics, where they can meet other spin patients and be treated by spin consultants. The rest of us can get on with the proper democratic process - Tony Benn, Labour MP

Peter Lilley. There was nothing there. I don't think even he knows who he is. In fact, I doubt if Mrs Lilley knows who he is - Rory Bremner, impressionist, on the only politician who has defeated him

Hold the front page: the end
is nigh ... or so it seemedDAVID
AARONOVITCH
MARKET FAILURE

When I was younger I used to think that capitalism was the pits. For a start, there were the inequalities. My pocket money, for instance, was - at 11 - half what my richer friend Michael earned for performing exactly the same sort of small boy role. Our work was the same, our needs were identical, but our rewards were hugely different. And even between the two of us (at the micro level, if you like) this disparity caused social tension; so one could only imagine what happened when you multiplied this jealousy and defensiveness by all the people in the capitalist world.

Nor was that the end of it. Capitalism - because it was essentially an exploitative and plundering kind of a system - also led to imperialism, and that entailed grinning colonial soldiers sporting the severed heads of freedom fighters from various parts of Asia and Africa.

But almost more offensive than both of these characteristics was the fact that capitalism was irrational; that it just didn't make sense. For a start, it made things that nobody needed, just because the capitalist who made these things wanted a profit, and tried to convince the masses that they should buy his product. And, at the same time, this capricious system didn't make what society actually did need, leaving many homeless, destitute, hungry and poor.

It was little wonder that such a system teetered always on the brink of collapse. Being irrational and based on rapacity, its stock markets and financial institutions were bound to be vulnerable to speculators and profiteers. In 1929, on Wall Street, the whole shooting match had practically been destroyed, and Hitler was the price that capitalism had had to pay for its salvation. So - it was clear to me - capitalism was silly.

Now, in those days, there was an alternative, called socialism. Under socialism, things were much better organised, since production was geared for need, rather than (a neat rhyme) for greed. And socialism was not just an abstract concept, it actually existed in Russia (albeit in a slightly disreputable and embarrassing form), and - more gloriously - in the hero states of Cuba and Vietnam.

Then, of course, I wised up. Socialism (as practised almost anywhere) turned out not to be that good, and capitalism - as regulated and mediated within the mixed economy - turned out not to be that bad. It helped that by now I was earning more than Michael, that the colonial struggle was pretty much over, and that the global market system had somehow escaped the stock-market crash and resulting slump that some of the more consistent revolutionary groups continued to predict.

And then - yesterday morning - I discovered that the capitalist system had just collapsed. More or less. Whumm! Just like that. "World market near meltdown" said *The Guardian* on the left; "Shares dive in world crash fear", proclaimed *The Telegraph* on the right. The responsible and sober *Financial Times* spoke of "global shockwaves" in its headline.

The language used was enough to make blood turn to ice. Tumbled. Dived. Triggering fears. Turmoil. Biggest one-day fall. On the brink. Slump. Wiped off. Slide. Banker commits suicide. "Overnight," we were told, "the Hang Sen index tumbled". Overnight! While we were sleeping! While our children were lost to innocent slumber, unguarded, the great mad markets of the capitalist world destroyed their parents' pensions, decimated the endowment mortgage, and imperilled their granny's savings.

Think about it (I thought). What about that section of our family's policies - paid for over the years by painful sacrifice - that was invested in "Far East securities". Securities? Are you kidding? Down 10 per cent in one day, and more to follow. For securities read insecurities, for girls read gulls. Oy, oy, oy.

And why is all this happening? Is it because half of Hong Kong has suddenly fallen into the sea, or demand for its staple product has unaccountably dried up, leaving it bankrupt? Have astronomers calculated that a meteorite the size of Kowloon is now heading our way with "Hong Kong" written on it? Perhaps it is linked to the recent revelations that the tiger economies of the Pacific Rim are nothing like as fabulous as some impressionable journalists have suggested (as exemplified by the killing smog from Indonesian forest fires choking up the streets of Kuala Lumpur, and ensuring that nobody can see that Malaysian capitalism has built the world's tallest building).

But it is none of these things. Thursday night's turmoil was not due to anything tangible, or even underlying. It was a judgement on the lunacy of land management in South Asian countries, or a response to the US's failure this week to agree the pollution reduction targets necessary for dealing with global warming. Apparently it was all down to something called "asset bubbles" (which is out a euphemism for farting in the bath. Or is it?) - and to testing Hong Kong's "peg".

So there we are. It transpires that the system is as daft and rotten as I thought it was when I was little, and that we are all about to go down the tubes.

Or rather, that was how it seemed when I began this article. Then, about an hour ago, I went to buy the *London Evening Standard*, so that I could trace the path of the coming 'slump. And there it is, in bold headlines: "London Faces Parking Blitz". At the bottom, ever so small, like a batsqueak, is a weeny headline on a teeny story. It reads: "Hoog Kooog recovery takes heat off City."

Beware the intolerant certainties
of European liberalsTREVOR
PHILLIPS
ISLAMOPHOBIA
IN BRITAIN

The problem with European liberals (small "l") is their intolerance. They will oppose, to the death, any kind of bigotry but their own. Their capacity to know what is best for others is unlimited, riding roughshod over the fact that people may not choose the same values as most Western Europeans. The famous Voltairian assertion of the right to free speech appears to be limited to precisely that - a defence of a man or woman's right to say what he or she likes, as long as he or she does nothing about it: at that point, tolerance runs out. Such is the liberals' certainty that their own version of the world is right that they entertain no doubts at all about condemning others' traditions, even where adherence to those traditions is the free choice of nearly a billion people worldwide.

This week the civilised, "rationalist" version of liberalism swung into action against Islam. Some people, including Polly Toynbee to these pages, clothed it in an assault on all religious practice, but the issue here is the growth of Islam, and the critique is moving rapidly from being a defence of human rights to a disrespects for others' beliefs that verges on the racist.

The Runnymede Trust's report on Islamophobia this week has brought a welter of liberal indignation. As chair of the trust, I sat on the commission which drafted the report, along with 17 others, the majority of whom were not Muslims; about half professed no particular faith. As it happens, I spent much of my childhood in Guyana, where a substantial Muslim community lived and worked side by side with Jews and Christians, with no apparent difficulty; I now find it hard to remember which of my classmates was a Muslim and which a Hindu.

The crime of the Runnymede report, it seems, is to assert two facts and to advance two propositions. The first fact is that Islam is a fast-growing, heterogeneous faith. People all over the world, including women, choose to adhere to this faith. In countries like Pakistan, the move from secular,



Many Muslim women choose to stay within their tradition

Photograph: Edward Webb

military, domination towards democracy produced states which were more rather than less Islamist. We may take the view that some versions of Islamist life are illiberal; but when faced with the choice between democracy and liberalism, I'll take democracy. Otherwise, we might still be debating the merits of slavery; liberal opponents of abolition argued for decades that though slaves were human, they were really children who might make the wrong choices for themselves.

The case against Islam rests heavily on the supposed experience of women. I instinctively find it hard to understand the apparently inferior position of women in many Islamist societies; however, the reality of life for many Muslims does not support the proposition that all, or even most, Muslim women feel oppressed because of their faith. Can one ignore the evidence of many independent, clearly self-possessed Muslim women who say that within their tradition, their status and their rights as women are protected? They also say they are appalled by what they see as the disrespects shown to women by non-Muslim societies.

The second fact was to point out that British Muslims often face discrimination because of their faith rather than their race. Once again, rather than bringing our own views to this question, we should listen to the experience of British Muslims.

It is indeed, difficult to separate colour prejudice from religious bigotry; however, when someone refuses you a job on the grounds that the firm can't have people going off to pray all the time, this is not racial discrimination.

The Runnymede team made two major propositions. First, that religious discrimination should be outlawed. Even if you do not accept others' right to profess a faith, it is a fact that the law, for the moment, allows Britons to do so. What, then, should we do where it is clear that the reason for people receiving inferior treatment is their faith? The report cites several episodes in which this is the case; yet to gain redress, the individuals concerned have to tell the courts that they believe that they were discriminated against because of their colour. Besides the fact that we would be asking people to lie to courts in order to gain justice, where does it leave the white convert, who cannot claim racial prejudice? We have laws in Northern Ireland which do precisely this job in protecting the rights of Catholics.

The second proposition made by the team was that state support for denominational schools should be made available to all denominations who can show that they are able to provide an acceptable level of educational achievement in the national curriculum. This is presently the case for most of Britain's major faiths. There is

no reasonable justification for denying the opportunity to those Muslim schools which can show competence and which already have waiting lists of hundreds. Yet the proposal is attacked on the ground that this would lead to separatism, and that it is almost impossible to define a religion. But you only need a prior definition if you want the state to lay down which beliefs are acceptable and which are not.

This is the contradiction at the heart of the rationalist liberal's critique. If you take the view that only certain religions should be state-supported, then what price religious freedom? If you say that no religious institutions should have state backing, you effectively impose a new religious secularism. But should the new Britain embrace diversity or not? The liberals cannot have it both ways. If they accept differences in our society, the more than one million British Muslims must be part of that diversity. If they don't accept diversity, it is tantamount to saying that

the only way of being British is to accept the secular, rational, traditions of some parts of Western Europe; in short, to be "white" in our values, whatever our individual backgrounds.

Two days ago I had tea with a charming, civilised man, who for some 45 years has been a stalwart of our cultural life. His mission has, in some respects, been to bring the values of high art to the nation. In the middle of our conversation, he used the archaic phrase "the nigger in the woodpile". I could have let it pass - after all, the man is over 70; but that's how these things persist. So I tried to remonstrate, gently. For all the effect this had, I might have been talking Serbo-Croat or Twi. In his civilised, rational, liberal world, my feelings must seem bizarre and ridiculously fussy. Like most people of his kind, he will never understand why other people don't share his values; but that's his problem. Liberal insensitivity must not be a reason for Britain to disrespect the feelings of many of its citizens.

Memories are made of this - exploitation, oppression, collaboration

The leaders of the Commonwealth do not like to dwell on the real story of the British Empire, but, says Richard Gott, young historians in its member countries are busy looking back.

As the Commonwealth conference meets in Scotland today, I shall once again raise a metaphorical wine glass to the memory of the late Sean MacBride, one-time chief of staff of the IRA and the only socialist foreign minister that Ireland has ever had.

MacBride, in a brief moment of glory, had the wit and foresight to take Ireland out of the Commonwealth, a step only otherwise taken by Burma (and once briefly by Pakistan).

It has always seemed appropriate that Ireland and Burma, the two countries in the British Empire treated worse than any other, should have stood out so steadfastly against joining the old members' club. A handful of other forgotten countries once painted red on the map - Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, Sudan, Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine - have also managed to remain missing from the Commonwealth line-up. They too suffered more than most from the excesses of British rule.

Many people in Britain, not least in the media, used to dismiss the Commonwealth as a tedious irrelevance. Yet the survival of this curious post-imperial relic has not been without significance. For many years, it had a pernicious in-

fluence, in prolonging myths about the British Empire that gave a false impression of both British and imperial history. Now there are signs that things are changing.

Faced with a choice between recalling the bloody or the benign, most people have preferred to dwell on the positive aspects of empire. The British like to think of the massacre at Amritsar as the exception to the rule. Yet fresh examinations of the wider history of empire - much of it now going on in Commonwealth countries - reveals that the massacre was hardly an exception. To a new generation of historians, the entire imperial saga was a singularly bloody affair. To truly make amends, the British would have to apologise, not just for one or two incidents, but for the whole centuries-long experience.

Two conflicting and interwoven threads can be detected in the historical tapestry of the subject peoples of empire. One concerns those who welcomed imperial rule, supported it, relished it, and collaborated with it. The other reflects those who opposed it, resisted its imposition, resisted its alien ways, and took every opportunity to rebel. The Commonwealth was

the fruit of a tacit agreement between ruler and ruled, at the time of independence, that there would be no investigation of the colonial past, no Nuremberg trials, no Peace and Justice commissions, nothing that would reflect adversely on a benign view of empire. The first generation of post-independence governments were happy to go along with this convenient forgetfulness.

It was perhaps a necessary myth. Britain's empire was established, and maintained for more than two centuries, through bloodshed, violence, brutality, conquest, and war. The empire-builders, the governors and administrators, were mostly military men. Large sections of the empire, for much of the time, were conducted under martial law. "Special" courts and courts martial were set up whenever trouble threatened, to mete out rough and speedy justice. Calmer judicial procedures, evolved over time in Britain, were replaced in the empire by rule through terror. There were no free trade unions, no free press.

To defend its empire, to construct its rudimentary transport systems, and to man its plantation economies, the British used forced labour on a gigantic

scale. For the first half century of empire after the loss of the American colonies in the 18th century, labour power was provided by black slaves, transported from one continent to another. Indigenous manpower in many imperial states was dragged into the imperial armies, or forcibly recruited into road gangs - building roads to assist the speedy repression of rebellion. When black slavery was abolished in the 1830s, the thirst for labour by the landowners of empire brought a new type of slavery into existence, dragging workers from India and China all over the world.

The subject peoples of empire did not go quietly into the long goodnight of history. Underneath the veneer of the official record there is a rather different story. Year in, year out, there was resistance to invasion, and rebellion against occupation. There were mutinies and revolts - by individuals, groups, armies, and entire peoples. At one time or another, the British conquest of distant lands was hindered, halted, and even derailed by the vehemence of the local opposition.

No one of this has been, during the 50-year post-colonial period since 1947, the generally accepted view of empire. As dis-

tance leads enchantment to the view, there has been a tendency, particularly in Britain but also in some of the governments of the Commonwealth, to view the imperial experience through the rose-tinted spectacles of heritage culture. Yet this benign, biscuit-tin view of the past is no longer the understanding of their history that younger people in the Commonwealth would now recognise. A myriad revisionist historians have been at work in each individual territory, producing fresh evidence about the horrors of the colonial experience. They have been recovering tales of rebellion and repression that make nonsense of the accepted imperial version of what happened.

The work of these historians has been slowly percolating through to governments. Nigerians are asking: what right does Britain have to talk about human rights? Mauritius is enquiring about the forcible removal of the inhabitants of Diego Garcia - in living memory. Zimbabwe is asking for compensation for the land seized in the 1890s. The British may yet regret that they once found the Commonwealth boring. It shows every sign of wanting to bite back.

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486.00	7.50
3.00	0.00
20.00	0.00

Source: **Bloomberg**
www.bloomberg.com



Anxious investors check the progress of their stocks on a monitor in a street in Hong Kong. Following a brief initial drop, the market rebounded in early trading

Photograph: AFP

Hong Kong surges but London and Wall St hit by jitters

Investors face a nervous weekend after stock markets in London and New York failed to pick up on renewed optimism in Hong Kong, where shares rose sharply after Thursday's slump.

Tom Stevenson, Diane Coyle and Stephen Vines track the continuing financial crisis.

The roller-coaster ride on the world's stock markets continued yesterday after Hong Kong enjoyed its second-highest rise of the year but London and New York failed to hold on to early recoveries. Volatile trading on Wall Street last night set the stage for another jittery week and no-one was prepared to call the end of the worst stock market crisis in 10 years.

The FTSE 100 index of leading shares closed 21.3 points lower at 4,970.2 after nervous trading in New York undermined the early benefit of a 700-point rise in Hong Kong. The index of British blue-chip shares had been over 5,100 in

late morning, a rise of 111 points, as investors watched with relief the recovery in the Far East. As eyes turned West, however, the mood darkened.

The Dow Jones index in New York rose 92 points within 10 minutes of opening but sentiment rapidly turned and within two-and-a-half hours shares had swung through more than 200 points to notch up a 1 per cent decline.

Parallels were immediately drawn with the week leading up to the stock market crash in October 1987 when a run of daily declines preceded the big collapse on Black Monday. On the Friday before the crash 10 years ago, a late fall on Wall Street left traders waiting anxiously over the weekend for the bloodbath on Monday.

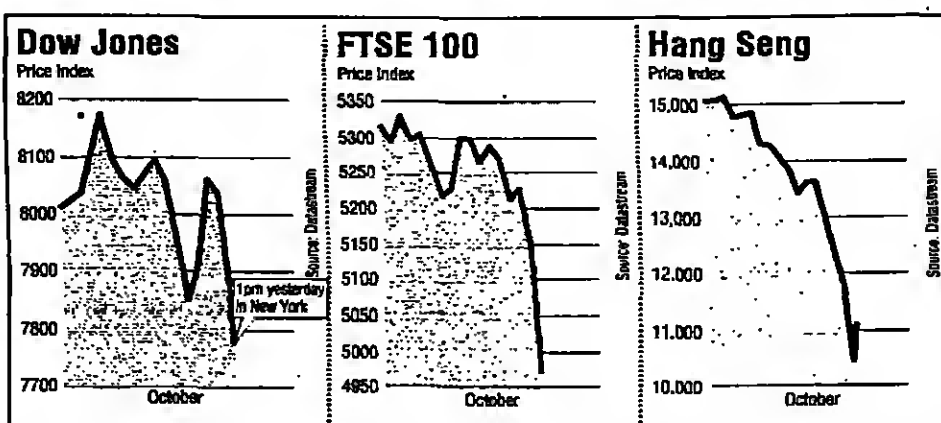
The mood at the weekend will also be influenced by speculation about a special statement due to be made to the House of Commons on Monday by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor. The Treasury confirmed he would set out the Government's policy on the single currency. It said the Chancellor was "acting decisively to stop speculation by

making the statement to Parliament at the earliest possible opportunity".

The stock market turbulence was reflected by the pound which bounced before closing slightly higher at just under DM2.90. The week began with a sharp rise in sterling due to uncertainty sown by an interview Mr Brown gave last weekend. It was only later in the week that the markets' attention switched to shares.

The FTSE 100 index has fallen by almost 6 per cent since Monday from 5,271.1, about one-third of the 18 per cent fall in Hong Kong over the past five trading days. It was an inauspicious first week's trading for the Stock Exchange's new automated order-driven trading system,SETS, which received widespread criticism during the week for exacerbating the market's volatility.

European bourses were also volatile, with the German DAX index, which reflects all-day computer trading, ending 5.06 points higher at 3,981.44, below the psychologically important 4,000-point level and way off its earlier peak of 4,066.27. In Paris, shares closed 7.84 points



lower at 2,849.03, after sliding 101.19 points on Thursday. The index had traded as high as 2,900.81 yesterday ahead of the New York opening.

Wall Street rebounded briefly before the fall in share prices resumed. The Dow Jones index gained as much as 89 points in early trading but then plunged lower. It was down 120 points down at 7.77 by midday.

The drop was led by technology stocks such as Texas Instruments and Motorola. The prospect of a speech by Alan Greenspan was also blamed for the nervousness. Although the Fed Chairman was expected to steer clear of any comment on the stock market, he recently caused an upset by describing the pace of Wall Street's gains as "unsustainable".

Despite the gloom, one noted stock market bull stuck to his view that share prices in the US will continue to climb. Abby Joseph Cohen, Wall Street guru at Goldman Sachs, said: "We continue to expect the US equity market to rise in price." The Hong Kong stock mar-

ket gave a whole new meaning to volatility yesterday. Having registered its biggest points fall on Thursday, the market saw its second-biggest rise of the year as bargain hunters sent the Hang Seng index up 718 points, a gain of almost 7 per cent.

Analysts were divided on whether the bounce meant the meltdown of Hong Kong stocks was over. Despite yesterday's rise, the Hang Seng index ended the week 18 per cent down.

The immediate cause of the big market decline did recede, though, as the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) acted to dispel the fear that the fixed link between the Hong Kong and US dollar would be broken, followed by a devaluation. The HKMA, which forced overnight inter-bank rates up as high as 300 per cent last week, was confident enough yesterday to do an about face and plunge the rate right down to 6 per cent.

Renewed confidence in the local currency was the major reason for yesterday's stock market rise but it was also

heavily influenced by market rumours that some HK\$1bn (£79m) of mainland Chinese money was floating around the market giving support. The circumstantial evidence for this rumour was seen in the almost 13 per cent rise in the index tracking red-chip shares, belonging to China-associated companies. The rise in red chips almost doubled the general rise in the market. Larry Young, the chairman of Citic Pacific, Hong Kong's biggest red chip, made no secret of the fact his company was buying its own shares in the market.

The rise in Hong Kong brought little comfort to other markets in the region. New Zealand suffered its biggest loss in a decade with a drop of 5.4 per cent. Australia was the next to fall, followed by Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. Shares in Bangkok declined by 3 per cent. Only the Nikkei 225 in Japan managed a 1.2 per cent rise and the Philippines stock market edged up just below 1 per cent.

Outlook, page 25

BLUFF YOUR WAY THROUGH THE CRISIS

DEAD CAT BOUNCE: The gloomy view of yesterday's early rebound. A sharp rise in prices after a severe fall, often caused by short-sellers buying shares at a profit.

SHORT SELLERS: Dealers who sell shares they don't own in anticipation of a fall. If the price goes down they can buy the shares more cheaply to match their obligation, and keep the difference.

BEAR SQUEEZE: What happens to short sellers when the market or share goes up. They have to buy at the higher price to honour their commitment to sell. Ouch.

FALL OUT OF BED: What happened on Thursday.

FLIGHT TO QUALITY: Falling out of bed is usually exacerbated by investors dumping their shares for safer bonds. Both gilts and

US Treasury bonds rose on Thursday.

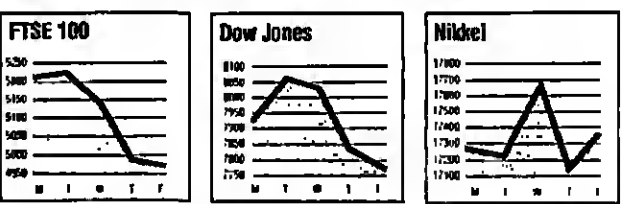
ON THE SIDELINES: A state of dithering that afflicts investors worried about falling out of bed, but not yet in the blind panic associated with a flight to quality.

CORRECTION: The crash of 1987 was actually a correction because the market almost immediately resumed its upward trend. The optimistic view of a crash.

BEAR MARKET: What happens when things go really pear-shaped. Between 1972 and 1974 the London stock market lost 70 per cent of its value. If the same happened today, the FTSE 100 index would fall to 1,500.

CIRCUIT BREAKERS: Measures to ensure that trading is halted if the market falls by a given amount.

STOCK MARKETS



Source: Reuters and other sources

Indices	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	4970.20	-21.30	-0.43	5330.80	3900.40	3.50
FTSE 250	4438.70	9.70	0.20	4963.80	4348.10	3.25
FTSE 350	2410.40	-7.30	-0.30	2765.30	1849.20	3.45
FTSE All Share	2361.32	-6.48	-0.27	2492.41	1925.79	3.43
FTSE SmallCap	2380.4	2.90	0.12	2406.20	2128.40	3.09
FTSE FTSE100	1297.1	1.20	0.09	1346.50	1198.70	3.22
FTSE AIM	1011.4	0.90	0.09	1138.00	1003.80	0.97
Dow Jones	7771.15	-77.36	-0.99	8258.21	5972.73	1.72
Nikkei	17363.74	212.19	1.24	21418.25	17151.55	0.87
Hang Seng	11144.34	718.04	6.89	16673.27	10426.30	3.73
Dax	4050.87	79.61	1.95	4438.53	2659.25	1.97

INTEREST RATES



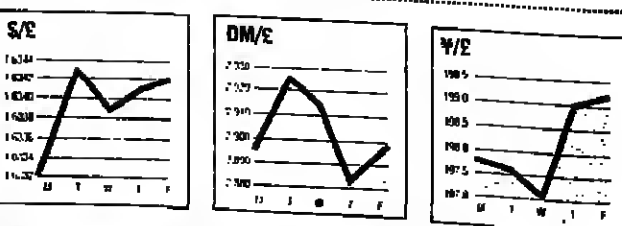
Money Market Rates

Index	2 month	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	10 year	1 yr	Long bond	1 yr
UK	7.37	1.30	7.56	1.13	6.53	-1.09	6.45	-1.38
US	5.81	0.28	6.06	0.25	6.00	-0.57	6.29	-0.56
Japan	0.53	0.03	0.58	-0.04	1.90	-0.86	2.51	-0.81
Germany	3.69	0.57	4.20	0.94	5.64	-0.34	6.21	-0.61

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg	Falls	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg
Mersey Docks	453.50	22.50	5.22	8G	257.00	-15.00	-5.81
De la Rue	436.00	20.00	4.61	Ironmills	305.00	-14.00	-4.39
JJB Sports	580.00	25.00	4.50	Capita Gp	302.50	-12.50	-3.97
Biff Energy	383.00	13.00	3.51	BTR	219	-8	-3.52

CURRENCIES



Pound				Dollar			
	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago		at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6342	+0.21c	1.5926	Sterling	0.6119	-0.08p	0.6279
D-Mark	2.8999	+0.96pt	2.4195	D-Mark	1.7740	+0.30pt	1.5202
Yen	199.23	+0.67	179.96	Yen	121.91	+0.25	112.86
E index	101.70	-0.50	89.20	\$ Index	105.60	+0.10	97.40

OTHER INDICATORS

at 1pm	Close	Chg	Yr Ago	Index	Chg	Yr ago	Next Rep
Brent Oil (\$)	19.68	0.28	23.55	GDP	112.80	3.90	24-Oct
Gold (\$)	316.15	-7.50	383.15	RPI	159.30	3.6	153.76
Silver (\$)	4.90	-0.17	4.98	Base Rates	7.00	5.75	Nov

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source: Bloomberg

Buoyant economy points to rate rise

The economy is showing no sign of having slowed down in the third quarter, and export volumes are rising as fast as ever despite the strong pound. Analysts yesterday concluded from the latest figures that it is only a matter of time before the Bank raises interest rates, as Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, reports.

The latest evidence on the temperature of the economy, the crucial figure for GDP growth in the July to September quarter, revealed the pace of growth to be feverish still. "A rate rise in November remains a distinct possibility,"

said Richard Iley, an economist at ABN-Amro. Others thought the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee might wait until December, but saw it as no more than a question of timing.

The economy grew by 1 per cent last quarter, taking GDP to a level 3.9 per cent higher than a year earlier, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said yesterday.

The preliminary figures showed the service industries still expanding fast, although at a slower rate than the previous few quarters. Manufacturing made up for this modest slowdown, growing "quite strongly" according to the ONS, while oil and gas extraction and energy supply showed robust increases.

The broad pattern of growth remained unchanged last quarter, with services expanding much faster than industry, and

business and financial services and communications leading the service sector.

In the 22 consecutive quarters of growth since the first quarter of 1992, the trough of the recession, service sector output has climbed 21 per cent. Industrial production, meanwhile, has risen by 14.5 per cent.

A key reason for the economy's failure to slow down this year despite higher borrowing costs has been the resilience of exports. Britain's trade gap continued to narrow in August, as export growth continued to defy the overvalued exchange rate.

The gap between exports and imports fell to £513m from £649m in July. Underlying growth in export volumes was 4.5 per cent in the three months to August compared to 3.5 per cent for imports.

Partial figures showing trade with countries outside the Eu-

ropean Union in September offered a hint of an export slowdown. The deficit increased from £343m to £779m.

Export volumes to non-EU countries dipped, leaving them virtually flat over the quarter while imports rose 1.8 per cent. However, trade figures are very volatile from month to month.

The pound's appreciation in the past 18 months is widely expected to hit the trade balance eventually as surveys have showed sharp falls in export orders for some time. Alan Arncliffe, head of economics at the Engineering Employers' Federation, said industry's switch over the years to producing more sophisticated goods had lengthened the lead time for export orders.

Simon Briscoe at Nikko Europe said manufacturers had coped by cutting margins, and this could not continue for ever.

Number of homes with pay-TV to double in 10 years

The pay-television industry in this country will turn in profits of nearly £2bn a year within a decade, according to a report to be published next week.

Cathy Newman looks at the pay-TV winners and losers.

Pre-tax profits from subscriptions and advertising in the pay-TV market will increase dramatically over the coming years as an explosion in the number of services on offer will encourage customers to pay more per head, says the report, by the media consultants, Oliver & Ohlbaum Associates, and the publishers, Screen Digest.

The number of homes subscribing to pay-TV is likely to double over the next 10 years to more than 12 million. However, cable subscriptions are not expected to drive the growth. The Cable Communications Association says cable companies have attracted two-thirds of new pay-TV subscribers over the past year.

Mark Oliver, managing director and founder of Oliver & Ohlbaum, said this trend was unlikely to continue. Although cable companies had been optimistic about improving penetration by offering customers smaller packages of channels, Mr Oliver said BSkyB would re-

spond by offering its own basic selection.

British Digital Broadcasting, the group operating digital terrestrial pay-TV, is planning to offer a low-cost package of a few selected channels for under £10. The report also says BDB will have to invest in excess of £400m before breaking even, £100m more than it originally planned.

Sports are likely to persuade viewers to switch from analogue to digital technology. Both cable and satellite are to launch on digital next year, and pay-per-view sport and "season ticket" football would drive the new platform, Mr Oliver said. Customers were more likely to fork out around £200 for the set-top box needed for digital television if they could watch a whole season's games for a club such as Newcastle United.

Cable operators will continue to have a tough time and are unlikely to make any money from their TV operations before 2003. Between now and then they will have racked up an extra £2bn in losses. Programmers will fare better, with basic channel providers such as UK Gold, Sky One, MTV and Granada Plus moving from an estimated combined loss of £173m next year to profits of £320m in 2007. Total pay-TV revenue from subscriptions and advertising will rise from £1.8bn in 1997 to £5.1bn in 2007.

BAe group wins bid to buy Siemens Defence Electronics

The consolidation of Europe's defence industry will take a significant step forward on Monday when a consortium of British Aerospace and Daimler-Benz announces the acquisition of Siemens Defence Electronics for about £375m.

The BAe-Daimler bid beat off offers from GEC and Thomson-CSF of France and is likely to set the scene for a further round of cross-border rationalisation of Europe's defence and aerospace companies.

For the past two years BAe has been championing the idea of a pan-European holding company taking in both commercial and military aircraft production and defence electronics. The deal on Monday will be an important step towards that goal since Daimler is also one of BAe's partners in the Airbus and Eurofighter programmes.

Siemens Defence Electronics has a world-wide workforce of 6,000, annual sales of DM1.6bn (£552m) and specialises in air defence equipment and battlefield communications systems. About half of its op-

erations are based in Britain under the name of Siemens Plessey Electronic Systems which Siemens acquired in the late 1980s following GEC's takeover of Plessey.

Siemens Plessey Systems has a UK workforce of about 2,500 and sales of £250m. Its products include air defence systems and naval radars. Siemens is also part of the Archer consortium which is bidding on the Bowman programme - a £2.5bn contract to supply the Ministry of Defence with a digital battlefield com-

munications system. Siemens has also designed and installed Germany's version of the Patriot air defence system.

The acquisition of Siemens Defence will come as a consolation to BAe after its failure to secure a stake in Thomson-CSF. The French government has selected Alcatel to partner Thomson-CSF as part of the privatisation of the state-owned defence electronics business. But it is a blow to GEC, which was in the bidding for Thomson and has missed out on two deals.

- Michael Harrison



**JEREMY
WARNER**
ON A WEEK OF
TURBULENCE

In Britain the confusion was about whether the Labour Government wants us to become a part of monetary union and at what stage. With memories of Britain's disastrous membership of the European exchange rate mechanism still relatively fresh, it was perhaps inevitable that those cautioning against it should eventually gain the upper hand. Hong Kong says it will cling to its treasured dollar

So why did he do it? Why did he give his interview to *The Times* in which he (ur his press advisers) encouraged the suggestion that there would be no decision on the single currency during the life time of this Parliament. While inaugurating the Stock Exchange's new order-driven trading system, he went further still, listing five pre-conditions for British membership. Why? The explanation seems to be that the Chancellor began to believe there was a real danger of the markets getting the

I've been accused by a number of readers this week of being a prophet of doom, of not just forecasting a stock market crash but actually wanting one, rather like one

Only time will tell, I guess, but I would argue that those of us who take this view are providing a useful counterweight to the much more powerful group of vested interests that go the other way. It's not quite so bad here, but in the US the situation has reached alarming proportions. You cannot switch on the television or open a newspaper without being bombarded with advertisements saying buy, buy, buy.

Edgar Cayce, the famous American clairvoyant, predicted that the City of Atlantis would rise from the sea near the island of Bimini sometime towards the end of the 1960s. It is now 1997 and we are still waiting. That might well be my fate with Wall Street too, but somehow I doubt it. Don't take it from me though. Just listen to what Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve has been saying about irrational exuberance. As far as I can ascertain, he has no vested interest in the matter.

The European Competition Commissioner, Karel Van Miert, looks increasingly likely to scale back the concessions Brussels is demanding from British Airways and American Airlines in return for approving their tie-up. Michael Harrison examines the latest state of play in the long-running battle to get clearance for the transatlantic alliance.

Mr Van Miert recently indicated he was prepared to relax his demand that the two carriers give up 353 take-off and landing slots at Heathrow. "It is not an absolute figure. If there is good reason to modify it we'll be willing to talk about it," he said.

The suggestion is Brussels may be prepared to see a smaller number of slots surrendered - perhaps 250 - with other capacity being made available from the other airline alliances already operating from Heathrow such as the Star Alliance spearheaded by Lufthansa and United Airlines.

Mr Van Miert is expected to set out his final terms for approving the alliance in the middle to latter part of next month after an exhaustive review of the alliance and extensive discussions between officials and executives from the two airlines.

BA has consistently argued that the Commission's initial findings were "flawed" because they did not take into account the fact that 52 per cent of all its transatlantic passengers originated outside the UK. This, it claimed, made it disinclined to concentrate painfully on its monopoly at Heathrow where it operates in competition with American on six routes.

What remains less clear is whether and if so how BA and AA will be compensated for slots. EU regulations are silent on the matter although in practice slot trading takes place. American paid TWA \$450m when it took over its services from the US to Heathrow and has made clear it will not hand back slots for free.

TOWARDS EMU: If the line moves towards the German base line it means investors no longer require such a high premium for holding that country's bonds compared to German ones, because they are confident the currency won't devalue against the mark, in other words, they think that country will be locked into a single currency with Germany in 10 years' time.

The independent asked analysts from: Nikko Europe, Paine Webber, ABN Amro, JP Morgan, Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, Salomon Brothers, Goldman Sachs, HSBC James Capel, UBS what probability they placed on EMU starting on time.

Probability EMU starts on time:	82%	(83% last week)
Probability EMU is delayed:	14%	(13% last week)
Probability EMU never happens:	4%	(4% last week)

Growing French hostility to domestic interest rate hikes has led to pessimism among some of *The Independent's* panel of experts about EMU's likely start date.

The Bank of France raised rates by 0.2 of a percentage point a fortnight ago, following similar moves by the German Bundesbank.

But, as higher interest rates may jeopardise French economic growth, left-wing politicians have objected to the Bank of France's actions.

On Tuesday, in an almost unprecedented move, France's parliamentary finance commission "invited" the monetary council, led by Jean-Claude Trichet, the governor of the Bank of France, to explain its decision to raise rates.

Huge increase in production pushes Boeing to \$696m loss

Boeing, the US aerospace giant, reported a \$696m (£426m) loss for the third quarter after taking a \$1.6bn pre-tax charge to cover the disruption in its assembly plants caused by the huge increase in commercial airliner production. The loss compares with net income in the same period last year of \$466m. The charge will cover the cost of overtime, production bottlenecks and penalty payments to airlines for late delivery. Boeing expects to incur a further \$1bn in charges next year.

Biocompatibles, the biotechnology group, has moved to strengthen its management team by appointing two US executives. Eric Sivertson will head up the group's cardiovascular division and Richard Kapash becomes chief executive of the eyecare division. Biocompatibles' share price has plunged since it failed to sign a deal with Johnson & Johnson of the US last month.

The Securities and Investments Board said it had decided not to impose regulations on stock borrowing and repo transactions, in accordance with advice it received from the Market Conduct Group, an advisory body. The SIB said it agreed with the group "that the borrowing of stock for on-lending purposes should be seen as permissible". The London Stock Exchange recently changed its rules so as to restrict business of this sort no longer.

Viglen Technology, formerly the Amstrad computer group, has sold Brentwood House, the old former head office of Amstrad, to Amsprop Trading for £3m. Alan Sugar, Amstrad's founder and a director of both companies, owns 76 per cent of the issued share capital of Amsprop. Mr Sugar also owns 34 per cent of Viglen.

The Energy Group said its subsidiary, Peabody, and partners NRG and Koc Holding had won a bid to acquire the 430 megawatt Kangal coal-fired generating plant in central Turkey for \$1.25n (\$77m). The consortium has submitted bids for other distribution and generation assets which are still under evaluation. Energy Group said power from the Kangal station would be sold to Teas, the Turkish national power company, under a 20-year power purchase deal. NRG is a wholly owned subsidiary of Northern States Power Company. Koc Holding is a conglomerate in Turkey and a Fortune Global 500 corporation.

Pathfinder Properties, the AIM-quoted property group, and Pathfinder Resources have agreed to merge. Pathfinder Properties is offering seven of its shares for every Pathfinder Repossessions share. The terms value each Pathfinder Repossessions share at 161p. There is a cash alternative of 115.5p. Pathfinder Properties said it was also seeking to raise an additional £1.3m for further property acquisitions and development via an open offer.

Keith Bradshaw, the chairman and founder of Care First, could find himself on the board of Bupa if his company is taken over.

Mr Bradshaw, who was criticised for a boardroom bust up with Chai Patel, the former chief executive of Care First, stands to make £18m from a takeover, reports Sameena Ahmad.

It is unclear whether Mr Bradshaw has asked for an advisory role as part of takeover negotiations. Mr Patel, who resigned from Care First after a row with Mr Bradshaw, owns 51m shares in the

An announcement from Bupa could come within two weeks. Advisers are SBC Warburg on Care First's side and Schroders for Bupa. Schroders advised Bupa on its £76m takeover of Goldsborough Healthcare, the nursing home group, in August.

Contrary to press suggestions, Bupa has no plans to go hostile in a bid for Care First. Suggestions that Omega, the US property management group, has had discussions with Care First were also firmly denied by Jim Flaherty, the chief

Norwich Union, a rival insurer to Bupa and which recently named Care First as one of its preferred providers for long-term care insurance, said it was happy to continue its relationship with Care First if Bupa's bid was successful.

Philip Scott, group director of life pensions said: "A bid from Bupa wouldn't change things. We already have shared agreements with Bupa on hospitals. Goldsborough is also on our preferred list of suppliers."

Eileen Marshall, director of regulation at Ofgas, the gas watchdog and architect of the controversial British Gas pipeline price cuts, has been

The move is likely to unsettle further the generators. National Power and PowerGen, which have been accused of abusing their market power to push up electricity prices.

Professor Stephen Littlechild, the electricity regulator, has asked Ms Marshall to head the review, announced on

Country	Sterling		Dollar		D-Mark	
	Spot	1 month 3 month	Spot	1 month 3 month	Spot	1 month 3 month
UK	10000		06922	06730	06145	06147
Israel	23307	23278	24289	24270	14261	14243
Japan	20534	20473	20347	20327	13619	13617
United States	22641	22616	22589	22569	36441	36416
Austria	22754	22695	22638	22617	35851	35826
Belgium	1078	1078	1078	1078	6713	6713
Denmark	14722	14714	14621	14598	1193	11927
France	86959	86848	86789	86769	11520	11519
Germany	10000	10000	59491	59393	59173	59144
Greece	25016	25021	25750	25722	17129	17688
Italy	45606	45761	46025	45918	29697	29697
Republic of Korea	1165	1165	1165	1165	7973	7973
Switzerland	1165	1165	1165	1165	14622	14617
Taiwan	28319	28303	28326	28312	16827	16827
Thailand	9733	9733	9733	9733	10128	10128
Turkey	52934	52592	52682	52690	34390	34390
Yugoslavia	12730				34390	34390
Canada	12730	12730	12730	12730	19971	19971
Netherlands	21870	21823	21823	21816	16750	16745
New Zealand	1645	1645	1645	1645	7187	7187
Norway	1645	1645	1645	1645	19797	19797
Sweden	1645	1645	1645	1645	19797	19797
Spain	1645	1645	1645	1645	19797	19797
East Africa	61294	61292	61057	61057	15000	15000
Indonesia	61294	61292	61057	61057	15000	15000
Malaysia	61294	61292	61057	61057	15000	15000
Philippines	61294	61292	61057	61057	15000	15000
Singapore	61294	61292	61057	61057	15000	15000
Thailand	61294	61292	61057	61057	15000	15000
Turkey	61294	61292	61057	61057	15000	15000
Yugoslavia	61294	61292	61057	61057	15000	15000
South Africa	24625	24622	24644	24644	14622	14622
Switzerland	24625	24622	24644	24644	14622	14622
Yugoslavia	24625	24622	24644	24644	14622	14622

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	16335	1000	Oman	62229	34400
Brazil	17979	1000	Pakistan	57179	44600
Canada	18033	1000	Philippines	57693	35300
Central Rep	54343	33385	Poland	56078	34629
Denmark	55576	33693	Qatar	56496	34629
Egypt	37019	22050	Russia	89133	59710
France	38101	22050	South Korea	15213	92530
Germany	55132	36230	Taiwan	64362	30250
Greece	55643	33903	Thailand	62296	39250
India	14670	35040	Turkey	22050	32500
Italy			UAE	55990	36725

UK	Germany	US	Japan
700%	Discount	2.50%	Prime
France	Discount	8.00%	Discount
Switzerland	2.50%	5.00%	0.50%
Italy	3.30%	Discount	0.00%
Prime	5.25%	Belgium	2.75%
Discount	8.25%	Spain	Central
Netherlands	Discount	10-d	3.30%
Spain	Discount	Sweden	Switzerland
3.30%	Denmark	3.75%	Denmark
		Repay(As)	100%
			Lombard
			3.88%

Country Discounts										
	3mth	chg	1 yr	chg	2 yr	chg	5 yr	chg	10 yr	chg
Australia	4.85	0.00	4.78	-0.02	5.11	-0.01	5.77	-0.02	6.24	-0.01
Brazil	3.80	0.00	4.30	-0.02	4.46	-0.06	5.83	-0.04	5.81	-0.02
Bulgaria	4.80	0.00	4.35	-0.04	4.39	-0.01	5.34	-0.01	5.42	-0.01
Canada	4.80	0.00	4.35	-0.04	4.39	-0.01	5.34	-0.01	5.42	-0.01
ECU	4.56	0.00	4.81	0.00	4.80	-0.01	5.38	-0.01	5.88	-0.02
France	0.00	0.00	3.98	-0.02	4.33	-0.07	5.00	-0.05	5.88	-0.05
Germany	4.80	0.00	4.30	-0.02	4.46	-0.02	5.39	-0.07	5.68	-0.04
Italy	4.80	0.00	4.35	-0.04	4.39	-0.01	5.34	-0.01	5.42	-0.01
Japan	0.44	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.54	-0.00	1.00	0.00	1.80	-0.01
Netherlands	4.80	0.00	4.35	-0.04	4.39	-0.01	5.34	-0.01	5.42	-0.01
Norway	4.95	0.00	4.90	0.00	4.59	-0.05	5.44	-0.07	5.99	-0.05
Sweden	4.31	-0.01	4.98	-0.06	5.20	-0.08	6.02	-0.08	6.40	-0.04
Switzerland	4.80	0.00	4.35	-0.04	4.39	-0.01	5.34	-0.01	5.42	-0.01
US	2.07	0.01	2.44	0.04	2.44	0.00	3.00	0.00	3.00	0.00
UK	6.85	0.00	6.85	0.00	6.91	0.00	6.65	-0.01	6.52	-0.01
US	5.00	0.02	5.36	0.00	5.76	-0.01	5.93	0.00	6.00	-0.01

Transaction type	Overnight	1 week	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
	Std Offer	Std Offer	Std Offer	Std Offer	Std Offer	Std Offer
LIBOR						
Domestic Depos	738 731	738 725	738 725	738 725	734 741	747 753
Export/Import Depos	733 725	738 725	738 725	738 725	734 741	747 753
Foreign Cash Calls			702 697	704 704	704 704	
Swing Cash			702 702	720 720	724 728	748 738
Eurodollar CDs			555 557		584 584	
SCU Deposits			425 425	444 428	453 434	

Source: Bloomberg

Contract	Settlement	Open	High	Low	Volume	Open/Close
Long Oil	Dec-97	70.78	72.01	70.31	42533	70.33
German Bund	Dec-97	102.13	102.10	102.05	16343	288591
US Long Bond	Dec-97	106.76	106.76	106.76	11940	
Italian Bond	Dec-97	111.57	111.52	111.48	1465	
Japan Govt Bond	Dec-97	123.89	123.84	123.68	1649	
3 Mth Sterling	Dec-97	92.82	92.84	92.81	8346	
3 Mth Eurodollar	Mar-98	92.59	92.60	92.56	13337	
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec-97	92.78	92.78	92.78	54229	
3 Mth Eurodollar	Mar-98	95.98	95.98	95.92	35445	
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec-97	93.81	93.85	93.76	18344	
3 Mth Eurodollar	Mar-98	94.48	94.47	94.43	1718	
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec-97	98.47				
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec-97	97.83	97.85	97.78	16579	
3 Mth Eurodollar	Mar-98	97.82	97.84	97.53	7764	
3 Mth ECU	Dec-97	95.36	95.36	95.36	620	
3 Mth ECU	Mar-98	95.28	95.27	95.24	334	
FTSE 100	Dec-97	4859.00	5145.00	4970.00	12594	

Liffe FTSE 100 Index						
Settlement Price: 4970.20						
Series	Call	Imp Vol	Put	Imp Vol	Do Call	Put
4950	272	30	105	29	263	105
4960	170	34	105	29	263	105
4970	272	34	175	29	270	145
5000	185	27	175	29	275	118
5050	185	29	350	27	255	265
					265	265

Energy				* as 5000 lbs			
Series	Call	Imp Vol	Put	Imp Vol	Do Call	Put	Feb Call
4950	272	30	105	29	263	105	352
4960	170	34	105	29	263	105	321
4970	272	34	175	29	270	145	323
5000	185	27	175	29	275	118	293
5050	185	29	350	27	255	265	276

Dec	1979	1980	1988	Oct	1980	1982	1988	Oct	1980	1982	1988
Nov	1979	1980	1988	Oct	1980	1982	1988	Oct	1980	1982	1988
Dec	1979	1980	1988	Oct	1980	1982	1988	Oct	1980	1982	1988
Nov	1979	1980	1988	Oct	1980	1982	1988	Oct	1980	1982	1988
Dec	1979	1980	1988	Oct	1980	1982	1988	Oct	1980	1982	1988

Commodity Indices				Goldman Sachs		at 500pm	
	Base date	Least		Chg	%chg	31 Dec	%chgYTD
Index	1970=100	208.38		1.09	0.52	25.28	-2.73
Agricultural	1970=100	240.63		0.80	0.25	25.23	4.07
Energy	1983=100	81.94		0.57	0.70	86.86	-4.57
Ind Metals	1970=100	71.04		0.40	0.56	106.79	1.51
Ind Nonmetals	1970=100	41.53		0.37	0.90	55.71	-5.53
Int Metals	1973=100	47.57		0.41	-2.24	45.54	-1.19

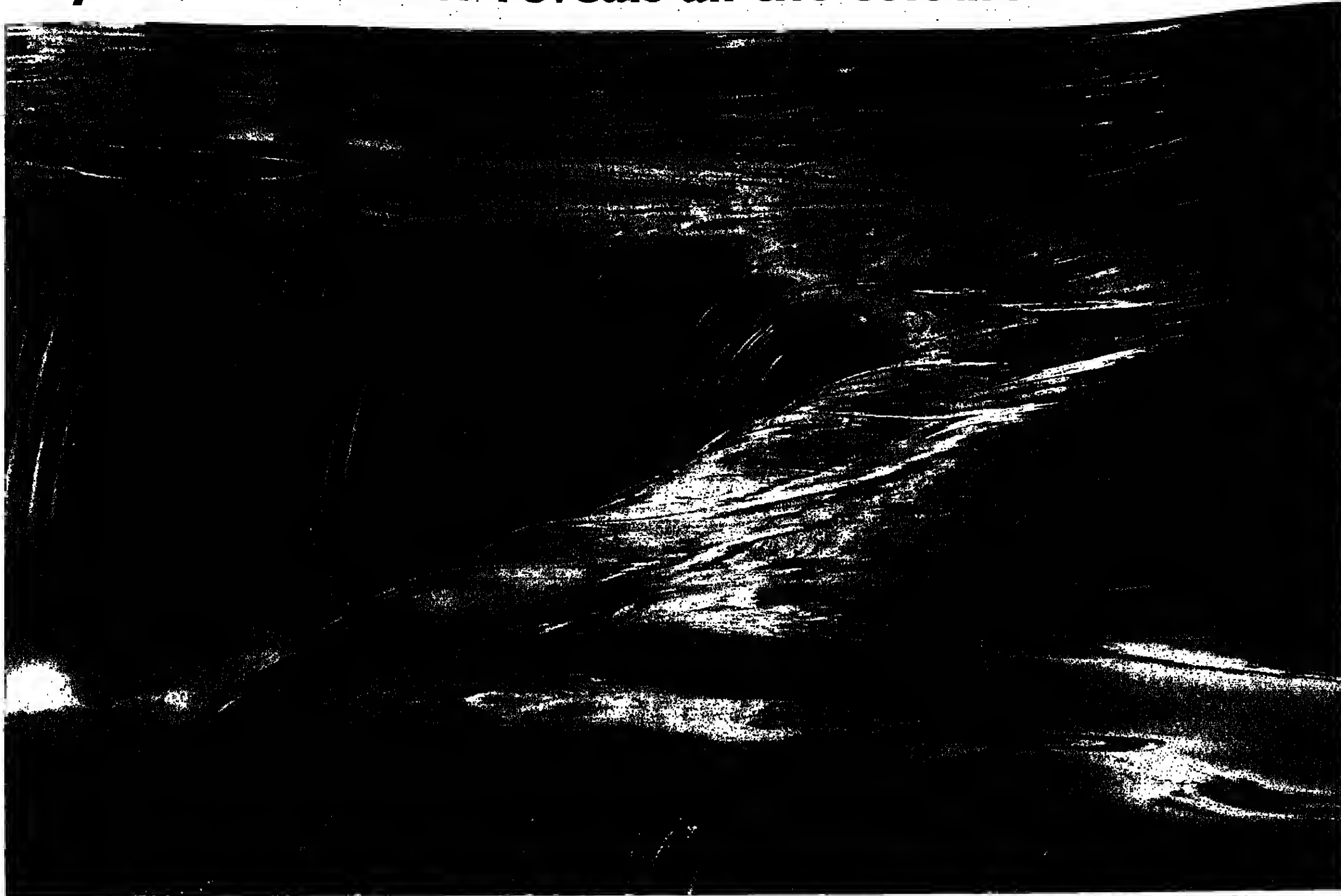
Alme (plasma)	Cash	Chg	3 month	Chg	1M alcobis (Chg)
Aluminum Alloy	564	1565	455	1598	-8 762550
Aluminum Alloy	1440	1450	300	1455	-2 485200
Aluminum Alloy	2248	2048	-1000	2057	-20 335550
Copper	1940	1940	1000	1915	-1 117725
Nickel	6110	6120	-10500	6130	-50 555654
Tin	5420	5430	3500	5445	30 10940
Zinc	2585	2575	-050	2577	070 459200

Precious Metals		pm flx/z per oz		Colins (\$)	
	Day's Year's		Day's Year's		Year's
Palladium	48300 - 5000	Palladium	25330 - 715	Knights	3215
Palladium	2000 - 850	Palladium	2220 - 845	Knights	7547
Palladium	430 - 107	Silver	300 - 41	Waples	4115
Gold	31655 - 725 - 6530			Waples	3355 - 5534

Agriculture						* as 50000
Cocoa	Coffee	Barley	Potatoes	Lign Potatoes		
LCFFE	LCFFE	LCFFE	LCFFE	LCFFE	LCFFE	
Dec/Feb	35750	Mar/Apr	7875	Mar/Apr	3200	
May/Jul	33600	May/Jul	8250	May/Jul	3200	
May/Jul	10500	May/Jul	8250	May/Jul	12500	
Mar/Apr	2712	Mar/Apr	185	Mar/Apr	65	

[illegible]

Crystal clear water reveals all the colours of autumn



'Autumn Colours on Waterfall' by Lawrence A Michael, winner of the composition and form category in the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition which is on display at the Natural History Museum until February.

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- 4Mb Data Expert S3 Virge Graphics (Does NOT use System RAM)
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- 33.6 BAST Approved Voice/Fax/Data Modem
- Maple 3D Theatre Soundcard
- Amplified AC Powered Speakers
- 3.5" FDD, Keyboard/Mouse
- IBM Voice Recognition Software with Mic
- Microsoft Windows 95 (inc. CD)
- Corel WordPerfect Office Suite 8 (inc. CD) (Linux SmartSuite Option available)
- CD Lifestyle Pack II - 4 CDs - 35 Titles
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- 3.5" Floppy Disk Drive, Keyboard and Mouse
- IBM Voice Recognition Software with Microphone
- Microsoft Windows '95 (including CD)
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Saturday 25 October 1997



At the heart of India's big bang theory

In many cultures sex and death go hand in hand, and nowhere more so than in Varanasi. As the Hindu festival of Diwali approaches this Thursday, Kenneth Wilson remembers another dramatic ceremony at one of India's most sacred cities.

Varanasi is the city of death. The life-giving river Ganges, flowing past the eastern edge of the city, here bears life away. At Varanasi, the sacred river is half way from its birth in the Himalayan abode of the gods, to its absorption in the Bay of Bengal. And this is the place to come and die.

The smell of death hangs over the city. Beside the new, unused crematorium, funeral pyres burn continuously on the bank of the river. Death in Varanasi, it is said, leads to immediate release from the cycle of birth and rebirth. Without passing Go, the soul proceeds direct to its absorption in the infinite - its *moksha*, its liberation.

From all over India eldest sons come to Varanasi, bearing the ashes of their parents, to scatter them on the great river. For not everyone has the prescience to reach Varanasi before they pass away, and having your ashes scattered on the Ganges at this holy point is the next best thing.

This is the city of Lord Shiva, known as the Destroyer, whose symbol is the unmistakably phallic lingam. The funeral pyres

symbolise Shiva's dance of destruction, leaping flames copying the frenzied ecstasy which releases the soul to find its new home in that endless cycle.

Nearly two tons of beaten gold cover the dome of Lord Shiva's temple, called Vishwanath, in the old city. In its dark interior, beneath enormous bells, stands the simple black lingam, adorned with flowers and gleaming with the milk and honey that are continually poured over it. And here, on the great night of Lord Shiva, when he is married to the goddess Parvati, the earth is shaken to its core, as the holy couple remake the universe.

Mahashivratri, as that night is called, is the night for love-making. Couples should remain at home, and with all necessary adornments relive their first night of conjugal bliss. Only the young men, waiting for their marriages to be arranged, are on the streets. In their tens of thousands they come to celebrate their virility, and sublimate it in a ferocious religious drama.

I followed the crowd that night. A mile from the temple it was already thick. A wind band, screaming mesmerically and tunelessly, and preceded by a dangerously lit float, hacked its way through. Almost naked sadhus, smeared with ghostly ash, lunged at us out of the crowd. Spotting foreigners, they opened their straw baskets and waved cobras under our noses, until they were satisfied with our donations.

Near the temple, we entered the realm



of barbed wire and armed troops. Like its better known cousin, Ayodhya, Varanasi is also sometimes a focus of Hindu-Muslim tension. It was a Mughal habit to build mosques aggressively close to the holiest shrines of the Hindus they had conquered, and here, as at Ayodhya, enthusiastic Hindus now want to tear them down.

Forty thousand troops, according to the following day's paper, were deployed to keep a million young men in order. Narrow barriers kept us controlled beneath high fences and barbed wire. The atmosphere was tense. The crowd was dense and hot, and religious fervour was heightened by drink and sweet-smelling drugs. "Hari! Hari! Bomi! Bomi! Hari! Hari! Bomi! Bomi!" The chant increased in intensity as we approached the temple's entrance.

It was a dangerous night to be out. Only

the flower-sellers and the troops were unmoved. Suddenly, at midnight, we rounded a final corner and surged towards the temple entrance. An army officer stepped out in front of me and barred the way. Telephone and revolver bulging from his khaki shirt, he placed his heavy black boots intimidatingly close to my ritually bare feet.

"What are you doing here?" It was not a friendly question.

I struggled to answer him in Hindi. "We have come to take *darshan* of Lord Shiva."

"Why? You are not Hindus. You are not allowed. Who is with you? Give me your passport." The crowd behind us was not pleased to be held up. The chanting seemed to grow louder.

I took a deep breath. There was clearly no going back through this crowd, so I knew

I had better be persuasive. "Tonight is Mahashivratri, when Lord Shiva recreates the world," I said. "On this night, anyone can be Hindu, *hai na?*"

"Hindi! You speak good Hindi! *Aage chalo!*" He smiled with sudden delight, and stepped me so hard on the back that I nearly fell into the mud. In we went.

Religious frenzy was boiling in the retchingly fetid atmosphere. Young priests, naked to the waist and streaked with red powder paint, took it in turn to restrain the faithful from throwing themselves out to the image of Lord Shiva. Others shovelled the thrown flowers' out into the drain.

The crowd behind kept us moving. It was a struggle to catch a glimpse of the holy image, and a struggle to breathe. And that was it. Pushed unceremoniously outside again, nowhere near where we had come in, we were lost. We hurried barefoot through the alleys, slipping through cow dung and bumping into sacred animals and soldiers snoring. Two men rounding a corner with a saffron-wrapped body on their shoulders nearly knocked us over.

Half a night later, being rowed gently along the glassy Ganges at dawn, we surveyed Varanasi's teeming river bank. Surya, the sun god, rose silently behind the far bank, and acknowledged the thousands of bathing worshippers. Lord Shiva, exhausted from the primal work of procreation, slept, and a new and reordered world came miraculously into being.

Life, the universe and everything: on the banks of the sacred river Ganges at Varanasi

Photograph: Colin McPherson

Getting there: the easiest way to reach Varanasi is via Delhi. Air Canada, Air India, British Airways and United Airlines fly non-stop from London Heathrow to the Indian capital; KLM/Northwest offer daily connections from numerous UK airports via Amsterdam. About a dozen other airlines will get you to Delhi via various indirect routings, stopping anywhere from Ashkhabad to Zurich. The lowest fares, starting at around £350 return, are available from discount travel agents rather than direct from airlines.

From Delhi, you can fly on Indian Airlines to Varanasi in a couple of hours for around £110 return. The train is much cheaper but takes around 20 hours.

Visas: British passport holders need a visa to visit India; call the 24-hour visa information service (0891 880800).

More information: Indian Government Tourist Office, 7 Cork Street, London W1X 2LN (0171-437 3677). Open 9.30am-1pm and 2pm-6pm.

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48 hours in the life of ... the Marais

You need a break – and a short cut to the soul of a city. Each week, 'The Independent' provides a description for the perfect weekend break. This week, Simon Calder spends 48 hours in Paris – and all of it within the medieval boundaries of the Marais.

Why go now?

Because autumn bestows an extra layer of atmosphere upon the ancient core of the Right Bank of the Seine. Because in just two days, it pays to concentrate on this small area of the French capital, rich in both artifice and humanity. And because by nipping across to Paris, you can regain the hour of evening light that you'll lose tonight.

Beam down

Exostar from London Waterloo and Ashford to Paris Gare du Nord costs a minimum of £69 – but if you want to travel out on a Friday and back on Sunday, the lowest fare is £79. From Gare du Nord, you can walk to the Marais.

Most parts of Britain have air links with Charles de Gaulle airport; you can travel non-stop from Birmingham, East Midlands, Edinburgh, London (any of five airports), Manchester, and Newcastle – and from Cardiff or Leeds-Bradford any day except Sunday. Fares start at around £60 return plus taxes – which, from next Saturday, will total about £20.

From the airport, the RER suburban railway will take you direct to Châtelet-Les Halles in 15 minutes for 47F. This station is just west of the Marais.

Get your bearings

The Marais comprises most of the third and fourth *arrondissements* – an area bounded by the Seine to the south, rue St Martin to the west, rue de Turbigo to the north west, and boulevard Richard Lenoir to the east. The medieval web of streets within this core is so tangled that the standard tourist map of Paris cannot show many of the streets. So look for the huge open-air street plans that crop up at various locations. These have a slot in the side where you can buy a map of the *arrondissement* for 5F; you'll need one for each of the third and fourth.

Check in

If you yearn for a traditional, small Paris lodging-house, where you climb a rickety spiral staircase to your room at the top, try the Hôtel du Marais, 16 rue de Beauce (00 33 1 42 72 30 26). But a price of 135F/150F single/twin means you don't get much in the way of cleanliness or comfort. A better bet is the two-star Hôtel Picard, 26 rue de Picardie (00 33 1 48 87 53 82), where you pay 200F/240F for a single/double. In both these places, though, you have to pay an extra 20F for a shower. There is no such charge at perhaps the most charming small hotel in the Marais, the Hôtel Caron de Beaumarchais, 12 rue Vieille du Temple (00 33 1 42 72 34 12), which charges 142F/234F single/double and 550F/650F single/double with breakfast an additional 54F. And even if you are sleeping elsewhere in economy class lodgings, glance into the lobby of this stylish residence,

decorated with musical scores and antique playing cards.

Take a ride

The good news is that the Pompidou Centre just sneaks within the frontier on the west side of the Marais. The bad news is that this chunky complex, designed by Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano, is undergoing refurbishment and is closed to the public: the *Tipi* (teepee) planted in the square outside is no substitute. The good news is that you can ride the five-level escalator to the gallery at the top, for one of the best free views of Paris.

Take a hike

It is both tempting and easy to spend the whole weekend ambling around the Marais. For an excellent start, circulate clockwise: begin on rue du Temple, turn right along rue de Bretagne, right again at rue de Turenne and right into rue St-Antoine, which quickly becomes rue de Rivoli.

Celebrate the immense detail of the Marais: the absurd figures decorating doors heavy with age, the meticulous explanations on street signs that tell you the origin of names (no suggestion is given as to the background of Pierre au Lard, who has a *rue* named after him near the Pompidou Centre, but his street is next to the impasse du Boeuf).

This circuit will give you a good introduction to the area, whose name translates as "marsh". When the land was drained, an ambitious programme of building took place. Many grand structures have survived, most of them elaborate *hôtels* – private mansions rather than public lodgings. One of the most miraculous is the Hôtel de Sully, on the north side of rue de Rivoli at the end of your walk. You can nip into both the outer and inner courtyards, to be transported to Grand-Siècle tranquillity.

Lunch on the run

A Monoprix supermarket opposite the Hôtel de Sully will provide you with a picnic. Or join the queue outside Chez Marianne, on rue des Rosiers at the corner of rue des Hospitaliers St-Gervais. You can feast inside on Middle Eastern nosh, but those short of time and/or cash can queue up for takeaway *falafel* – huge, stuffed pitta pouches for 20F each. Before you join the line, buy a ticket from the shop part of the complex.

Cultural afternoon

Forget the rest of the capital's museums and galleries; even within the bounds of the Marais there is more than enough to satiate your spirit over a weekend.

For an undemanding warm-up, start at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie (just south of rue de Rivoli at 5 rue de Fourcy, admission 30F). A graceful gallery has been slotted on to medieval foundations. The present highlight is Annie Assouline's collection of *Visages de Pierre*, photographed in Rome a year ago.

The neighbourhood heavyweight, though, is to be found within the Hôtel Salé. The Picasso Museum at 5 rue de Thorigny is set in the 17th-century home of a salt tax collector. He was clearly a man of some wealth and taste: it's worth paying the 30F entrance fee just to admire the fine stucco work in the opulent entrance

hall. But, of course, the true treasures here are the excellently presented sketches, paintings and sculptures of the modern master. Leave at least two hours to take in the staggering range of Picasso's techniques and styles.

Window shopping

If the Marais has a high street, then it is rue Rambuteau – the dividing line between the third and fourth *arrondissements*, which feels curiously like the main thoroughfare of a provincial town. Droll a little on the charcuterie and pâtisserie, then go east to rue Vieille du Temple. The highest concentration of

retro shops is located here, selling all that Seventies junk – sorry, cultural antiques – you never knew you needed. If you actually want something useful and good value, then locate the curly old ironwork of the Carreau du Temple. On Saturday and Sunday mornings, this lovely, airy market devotes itself to cheap clothing.

Demure dinner

A three-course meal in the middle of Paris for a fiver? Still possible, and a lot tastier and jollier than you might fear. The venue is Le P'tit Gavroche, in the heart of the gay quarter at

15 rue Ste-Croix de la Bretonnière. Between 7pm and 10pm, you pay 48F for three decent courses of, say, *pâté*, fish and *gâteau*. Wine is similarly budget-priced. If you are prepared to spend a little more, the Marais has dozens of tempting possibilities. An excellent local favourite is Amadeo, south of Rivoli at 19 rue François Miron; book in advance on 00 33 1 48 87 01 02.

Sunday morning: go to church

From the Armenian Cathedral to the aeronautical buttresses of St Gervais, the Marais is plump

with places of worship. Visit any or all for a more spiritual experience than Notre-Dame. Perhaps the most joyfully unexpected is St Denis du Saint Sacrement, at the north end of rue du Temple, where the mid-morning light floods the virtuous vacuum in the vast nave, then glances around the capacious dome.

Bracing brunch

Marriage Prères is a Marais institution, a genteel tea-room on rue du Bourg Tibourg. At weekends you can choose from four brunch options, of which the best (though not the biggest) is

Le Gouverneur. For an all-in price of 165F, you get a *cocktail marriage*, fresh fruit juice, muffins, a mountain of savouries and a raid on the pâtisserie selection wheeled around on the *chariot colonial*. No need to eat again for a week.

A walk in the park

After a brunch like that, you'll need one. A particular delight of the Marais is the number of green spaces (and since dogs are banned from them, they comprise the only places where you can afford to lift your eyes from careful study of the ground). One pocket-sized favourite, the

Jardin de l'Hôtel de Sens, takes only half a minute to wander through, but provides a private view into the elaborate back garden of the mansion. Or try the square du Temple: a village-sized green complete with bandstand and duck pond, where you can meet the dozens of nationalities resident in the Marais.

Inevitably, though, you will gravitate to the place des Vosges – a perfect square in both the mathematical and architectural senses. Laze around on the newly accessible grass, for a liberating contrast to the strict formality of the handsomely cloned town houses.



The Marais is plump with places of worship: St Denis du Saint Sacrement

Photograph: Simon Calder

Summer time officially ends tonight, when the clocks go back an hour. But according to English Heritage, which looks after some of the country's finest properties, it finished some time ago.

After a hyper-stressful trip to

Paris and back (see opposite page) last weekend, I wandered along to Chiswick Park to unwind.

The English summer was giving its final, vintage afternoon performance. An unusually benign October sun beamed

cheerfully over this rambling West London repository of calm. The picture was perfected by Chiswick House, a Palladian villa at the heart of the park. Sunlight dappled the handsome sandstone, making the Earl of Burlington's 18th-century creation look especially winning and bringing summer 1997 to a triumphant finale.

An English Heritage sign outside gave details of opening times in October: "10am-6pm, or dusk if earlier". So, shielding my eyes against the solar glare, I looked for the entrance.

Five minutes later, having circumnavigated the property twice, I concluded that the

place was locked, bolted and empty. With a dazzling golden orb still hanging happily somewhere over Hounslow, dusk seemed at least an hour away. Yet the sun had already metaphorically set on Chiswick House.

So, instead, I wandered off to commune with the gossiping geese. Later, my dictionary revealed dusk to be "the darker

SIMON CALDER



stages of twilight", and in turn defined twilight as "soft light after sunset".

I couldn't help noticing the adjacent definition for twilight zone, which sounded a worryingly precise

definition of my neighbourhood: "inner-city area where houses have become dilapidated". Still, at least as a permanent, rather than temporary, London resident, I can return some time

soon. But I fear such a casual attitude to tourism displayed by English Heritage will be regarded by foreign tourists as discourtesy. As Britain's share of the global tourism cake continues to decline, there are sound economic, as well as moral, grounds for showing respect to overseas visitors.

Most foreign countries demonstrate huge amounts of respect to British tourists – especially, in my experience, Arab nations. Gareth Davis, who presents *Travel Live* for the cable channel Travel, says he shares this view, but with one notable exception: Tunis airport, where the

Arabic spirit of generosity appears to have been extinguished.

At the end of a trip to Tunisia, Mr Davis found his GB Airways flight delayed by six hours. He sought solace in the executive lounge. But at Tunis airport, even premium passengers are limited to just two drinks.

Mr Davis sipped his way through the allowance as slowly as he could, then set off to find additional refreshment. A coffee vendor was selling small cups of the beverage for three dinars. At around £1.80, this is many times the going rate in downtown Tunis.

What about people who had spent all their local currency? "No problem," said the coffee man. "You can pay with sterling."

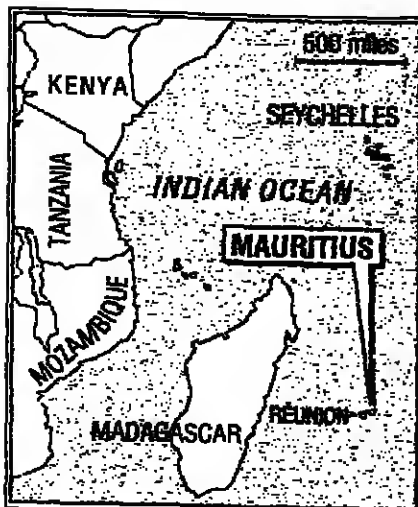
How much will a cup cost then? "£5."

After he had stopped laughing, Mr Davis started worrying. "There were lots of families stuck in a hot, airless departure lounge, with no way of escaping to the outside world. The abuse of a monopoly meant parents could end up paying £20 for a round of soft drinks. It seems a shame that this could be the main memory for people returning from an otherwise lovely country."

WORLD COVER

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Creole charm in unchartered territory



Mauritius has become known as the most exclusive of upmarket holiday destinations. But, as Katherine Roberts discovered, there are plenty of beautiful places for the non-millionaire to stay in.

The French priest's dusty and dented Morris Oxford charged through motley crews of dogs and hysterical chickens. As he spun round corners, we blenched and sufficed. We jerked over potholes and clutched at whatever was to hand. "Casse coal tar!" he growled through clenched teeth, and laughed like a hyena. "You know this Creole saying, eh?"

In Mauritius, nearly everyone speaks French, and although the official language is English the lingua franca is Creole. Outrageously colourful, full of double entendre and imagery, Creole is a constantly changing language that confounds not only French linguists, but Mauritians too. "Casse coal tar?" I muttered. Perhaps I had been away too long – each visit enriches my Creole vocabulary, but this particular expression baffled me.

This tiny island in the Indian Ocean, 1,400 miles from the east coast of Africa, has managed to preserve its upmarket image ever since tourism took off in the Seventies. Charter flights are banned and relentless promotions highlight the regal excellence of its hotels, which border blindingly white beaches – and have impeccable service to match. "But," said my Mauritian cousin, "paradise comes at a price – unless you know where to look."

And then she put paid to the mystery of casse coal tar. "Casse means to break," she said, "and your priest was probably driving so fast that he was tearing up the surface or 'coal tar' before it had set hard on the roads."

But not all roads in Mauritius are humpy. Gucci-style globetrotters are met in limousines and whisked along a silky-smooth highway to hedonistic hideaways. If rubbing shoulders with celebrities and stars turns you on, then naturally you have to pay up. But why get charged the earth when you can use the same beaches, the same coral-fringed lagoons and the same restaurants, and stay at places such as Pereybere, just a few miles from the island's most developed resort, Grand Baie, at a fraction of the price?

Here you can rent lovely rooms in leafy lanes, comfortableungalows and modern

apartments in low-rise complexes with swimming-pools. All within a few minutes' stroll of the sea. No wonder Pereybere appeals to the free-spirited on a budget, and it's popular with Mauritians, too. Beach bars and unpretentious Creole restaurants dish up specialities such as *poulets aux trois merveilles* and mind-blowing curries such as *viande*. Best of all, Pereybere's bus service is a godsend for the unpacked soul, who, for a few rupees, can explore the coast or visit the capital, Port Louis.

Here, supermarkets are well stocked, impersonal and off-puttingly European. For the unadulterated Mauritian shopping experience, try haggling over the price of pawpaws and pineapples from old boys on bikes, or barter for multicoloured beach wraps and T-shirts at prices well below those of hotel boutiques. Minimalists, meanwhile, can buy anything from loo roll to lychees in higgledy-piggledy, Chinese-run corner shops.

The sun sets early here throughout the

Getting there: The only direct flights from Britain are on Air Mauritius (0171-434 4375) from Heathrow and Manchester for £635 plus tax, and British Airways (0345 222111) from Gatwick. Air Mauritius goes non-stop from London, whereas BA refuels at Nairobi.

Numerous companies offer inclusive holidays based on these flights, including Beachcomber (01483 533008), British Airways Holidays (01293 615353) and Hayes & Jarvis (0181-748 5050).

You can also sail from Felixstowe to Mauritius in four weeks, on a cargo vessel, for £2,380 one way. Book through Strand Voyages (0171-836 6363). More information: the Mauritius Government Tourist Office is part of the High Commission at 32 Elvaston Place, London SW7 5NW (0171-584 3666).

year, and it makes sense to arrive at your evening destination by 6.30pm. After dark buses are scarce and you may have to rely on taxis, or hire a car at around £40 a day. Hitchhiking may be the only alternative outside tourist areas. But whether you thumb or drive, be warned that Mauritius has one of the highest road accident figures in the world, and since a national road improvement plan was introduced to

resurface main roads, the driving has got faster.

One of these new roads hugs much of the southern coast, starting from Bel Ombre, with views of limpid lagoons and deserted beaches on one side and undulating fields of sugar cane on the other. Now and again powerful rollers pound against beaches unprotected by coral reefs – reminding you that due south lie

the great wastes of the Antarctic.

At Bel Ombre, the only vehicles you are likely to encounter are lumbering lorries laden with fat sheaves of sugar cane and minibuses crammed with cane-cutters bound for the nearby factory. The air is heavy with the heady aroma of molasses. Walking along shaded avenues of coconut trees, scrambling over black volcanic rocks to discover coral caves, or wandering through acres of velvety-green sugar cane fields, is a world away from the maelstrom of the tourist track in the north.

In between walking we waded down huses and humped along rutted roads uphill through towns and villages to Curepipe, in the centre of the island. Nearby, Plaine Champagne has lovely lush forest land and walking trails that lead to magnificent viewpoints such as Trou aux Cerfs and Black River Gorge.

Pocket-sized mountains pop up from gentle landscapes, like natural compasses, silhouetted against swirls of cloud

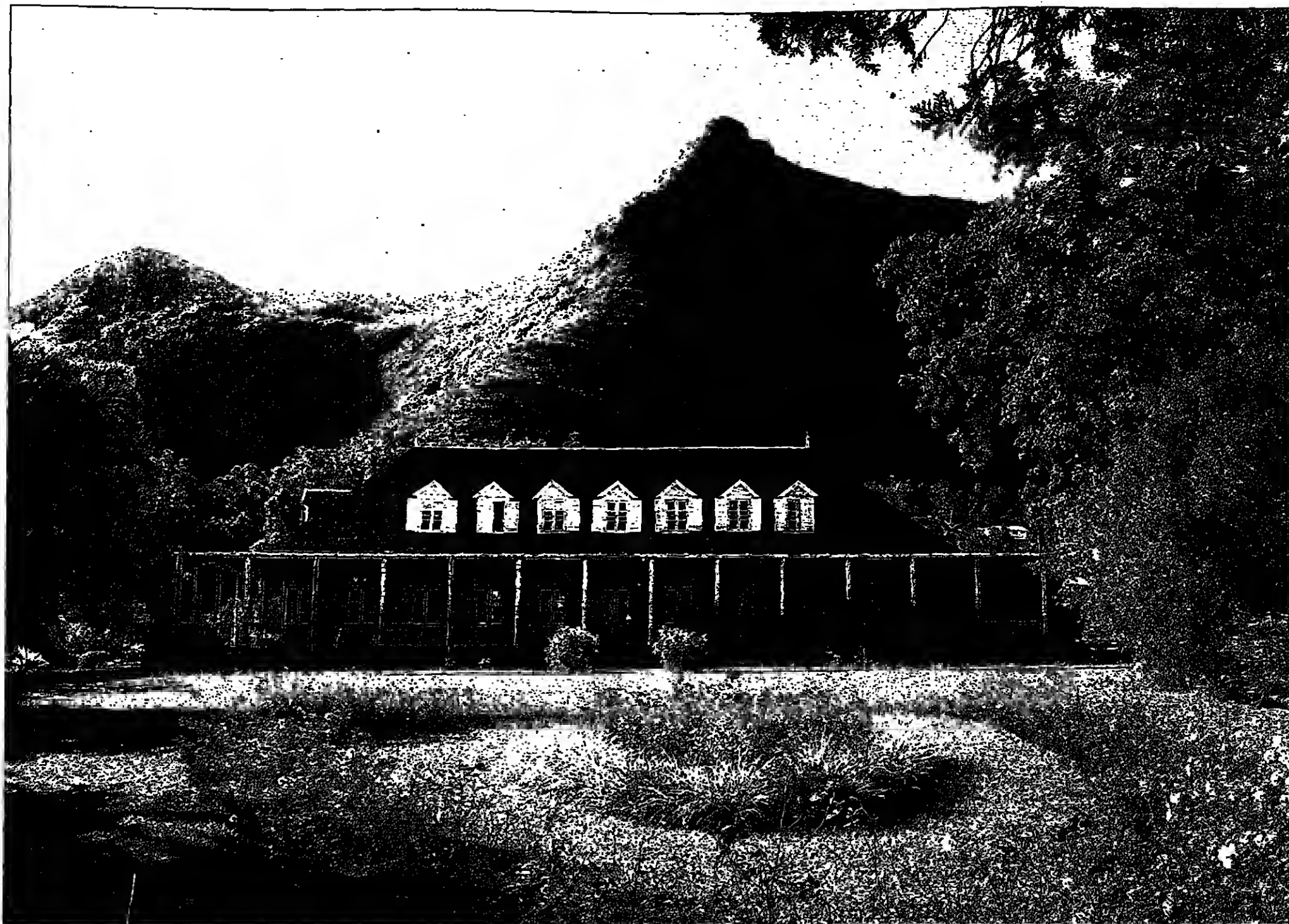
daubed against a peacock-blue sky.

Mauritians are cultured, humorous and helpful to visitors. They are a mixed bag of nations. Most of their forefathers came from India to work as indentured labourers just after slavery was abolished in 1835, but descendants of settlers from Europe and China, and African slaves, have produced such a diversity of skin colour that it doesn't matter who you are, or where you come from – you are accepted and welcomed as part of the multicultural landscape.

We spent our first days exploring the rugged south coast, with its rolling hills of sugar cane and rocky cliff tops. Picnicking on a grassy headland at the island's most southern point, Gris Oris, reputed to be linked with witchcraft, we could have been forgiven for thinking that Dorset had been misplaced on the map. As we squinted through the glare of a tropical sun across the wilderness of the ocean, no witches came. But then they wouldn't, in this earthly paradise.

Mauritius: where paradise comes at a price – unless you know where to look

Photo: Mark Pain



Taxing on the runway

From 1 November, British airport tax doubles. But if you plan carefully you may be able to avoid it. Neil Taylor, managing director of Regent Holidays, offers some advice.

The Yellow Pages in Bristol, like those in most big cities, are full of advertisements from tax experts offering advice on income tax, capital tax and inheritance tax. Surprisingly, none offers advice on Air Passenger Duty (APD), even though two Bristol MPs – first William Waldegrave and now Dawn Primarolo as Chief Secretary to the Treasury – have between them been responsible for this tax. The absence of avoidance advice is particularly surprising since careful planning can reduce travel bills by hundreds of pounds. When APD doubles next Saturday, avoiding or reducing them will be all the more important.

Travellers in South-east England have the easiest solution for short breaks to Europe. They can switch to the train or the coach, which remain untaxed. While a business traveller happy to pay £300 for a fully flexible ticket

from London to Edinburgh or to Paris may not be bothered by a £10 tax additional tax, on tickets costing £60-£70 such a surcharge will be a great boon to the rail and coach companies. Is the Government perhaps trying to subsidise the Channel Tunnel by the back door?

For many trips, however, air travel is the only option. Careful planning for departure, for en route stops and for the return can minimise your liability. For travellers to the US there is now an arrival as well as a departure tax, not to mention an immigration inspection tax and a customs tax. Elsewhere, taxes apply only on departure at the first airport and en route stops do not usually affect it. Britain's APD has regulations as confusing and as illogical as the Sunday trading laws, which went out just when APD came in.

Within Britain, the tax is paid only once on a round trip, if passengers return to the same airport, but it is paid twice if they return to a different one. Flying from Glasgow to Heathrow and returning from Gatwick attracts two taxes, whereas a Glasgow-Heathrow return attracts only one. Perhaps devolutionists will tackle this. Two rates currently apply for travel abroad – £5 and

£10. Both will double on 1 November.

In theory the lower rate applies for domestic flights and for EU destinations and the higher one for everyone else, but there are many exceptions. A family going skiing in Switzerland next winter must be sure to fly to Basel or Geneva and not to Zurich, since APD will be £20 to Zurich and £10 to the other two airports. Greece and Turkey are traditional rivals for British tourists; should Turkey be penalised with an extra £10 tax because it has not yet been admitted to the EU? The Czech Republic is likely to enter the EU in 2001; until then visitors on direct flights to Prague will pay £20 whereas those willing to travel via Munich will pay only £10. SAS and Austrian Airlines compete in Britain to many European and Asian destinations. How many travellers realise that Austrian taxes apply for transit through Vienna, whereas no taxes apply via Copenhagen and Stockholm? SAS thereby has an advantage of about £7 on every ticket it sells.

Frequent travellers to the Baltic countries now never finish their trips in Riga, which introduced a £17 airport tax this June, but always in Tallinn, which has never had a tax.

Regular travellers to the Far East know the definition of "transit" in every single country. A generous definition allows 24 hours without payment of tax.

In Asia, airport taxes are usually paid in cash on departure, convenient for travel agents here who can therefore provide "cheaper" tickets, but bringing a nasty end to a holiday for passengers who are unprepared. Hong Kong used to have one of the highest, around £13, but the return to the motherland has brought it down to £8.

When APD was introduced, an exemption was allowed for aircraft with fewer than 20 seats. Cynics pointed out that the main beneficiaries were owners of executive jets, but one escape route from Britain was left. Suckling Airways operates 18-seater Dornier 228 aircraft from Cambridge to Amsterdam, with connections there to the extensive KLM network, most parts of the world can still be reached tax-free. Until 1950, Cambridge graduates used to get a second vote for one of the university seats in the House of Commons. Should their successors travelling to Amsterdam again enjoy a privilege denied to passengers leaving from Stansted, Norwich or, ironically, Bristol?

RED CHANNEL

A compendium of hazards facing the traveller. This week's warnings about nations around the Baltic.

Latvia: Car theft is rife. Wherever possible, guarded car parks should be used and valuables kept out of sight. Drivers should carry original copies of vehicle registration documents when crossing the border by car.

Winter visitors should seek medical advice about inoculations against influenza and related ailments – Foreign Office Travel Advice Unit (0171-238 4503)

Sweden: There have been several racist murders and countless attacks on dark-skinned foreigners over the last couple of years, and it pays to be vigilant: keep your eyes and ears open and avoid trouble, especially on Friday and Saturday nights when drink fuels these prejudices – *Rough Guide to Sweden* (£10.99)

Estonia: Robbery and violent crime continue to be a problem. Muggings, pickpocketing and car thefts are common and can occur in daylight. Foreigners leaving bars alone or in small groups late at night are a favourite target. There have been several instances of criminals in bars and on trains offering unwary victims drinks laced with a powerful sedative and then robbing them while they sleep – US State Department

GREEN CHANNEL

Nowadays, we're used to recycling. But what about a hotel? Scandic Hotels, the Nordic region's largest hotel group, insists that its 194-room Scandic Hotel Oslo Spjalt in Norway is in fact 97 per cent recyclable – the world's first. By Sue Wheat

Scandic already has 2,700 "eco-rooms" in its 85 hotels across Europe (15 of which are under the Holiday Inn name), but this is the first time a whole hotel has been designed with such environmental tenacity.

However, never fear, there are no horsehair furnishings here. The eco-rooms include parquet floors, Nordic woods and pure wool and cotton furnishings. This is environmental tourism with style. And behind the Nordic flair is a well-thought-out green policy. Use of plastic and metals is kept to a minimum – all bathrooms are enamel, not chrome, and taps, showers and toilets conserve water by having slightly reduced flows. Room temperatures are monitored by computer and

energy is conserved when you're not there. Your rubbish bin has three different compartments for paper, organic waste, and metal and plastic. In the gardens you may catch a glimpse of solar-powered lawnmowers; in the restaurant organic food is served; in the laundry, chlorine bleach has been banished.

Scandic says that its eco-rooms are always the first to be booked. Research by British Airways Holidays would suggest that such green ideals are not the monopoly of Scandinavians. Caribbean hotels have been given the environmental thumbs-up from BA Holidays and the International Hotels Environmental Initiative.

Of the Caribbean hotels surveyed, 100 had assessed their systems for managing waste, controlling hazardous chemicals and monitoring energy and water use. Just over half – 53 per cent – of BA Holidays' customers said that they would choose an airline or tour operator that took into account environmental issues.

Scandic Hotel Oslo Spjalt (00 47 2315 5100)

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Walking the plank – you'll fall for it

To learn snowboarding, you don't need to go to a mountain, and it doesn't matter that you can't ski. Just embrace your instructor and learn how to fall – yes, it will come in useful – at the Snowdome in Staffordshire.

Skiers frequently wonder why snowboarders don't look where they are going. Often they do so out loud, and sometimes at the tops of their voices.

I have the explanation: it is the way they are trained. I have just had my first snowboarding lesson, and the first thing the instructor said when we got out on the snow was that I should go down the slope backwards.

He was adamant that I was not to look where I was going.

I didn't go to a glacier for my lesson. I just followed the tracks of the two children featured in these pages a couple of weeks ago – to Tamworth, in Staffordshire. The "real snow" indoor slope of its Snowdome centre was the obvious place.

After years of skiing, snowboarding seems pretty crude. No poles, no hi-tech boots, no quick-release bindings: just soft shoes, four straps and a plank. Which way you strap yourself on to the plank depends, so the equipment man at the Snowdome told me, on "which foot you used to lead with when you did ice slides in winter on the school playground": my memory is a little misty so I mimed some slides and found that I favoured the left – which made me, to use the technical term

"regular" rather than "goofy".

Nigel Dix, my 25-year-old instructor, introduced me to the board and the boot-strap. Then he turned to the correct procedure for falling over. I thought I already knew how to do that, but I didn't recognise the complex manoeuvre he demonstrated – it's not unlike the "brace" position in which you are supposed to wait for a plane to crash – and I was sure I wouldn't be able to remember it if I were to fall over. Not "if" but "when", Dix assured me: I was "100 per cent guaranteed to fall over", he said. When he listed the snowboarding injuries he had suffered (nine ribs broken twice, ruptured shoulder muscle, shattered knee cap, broken knuckle), I understood why one pupil who had invested £40 in a one-on-one lesson announced – so Dix told me –

that he had "made a big mistake", and refused to go out on the snow.

Being made of sterner stuff, I marched out on to the 150-metre slope with him. I had rather taken to Dix, anyway, despite his Brummie accent. Which was lucky, because we spent much of the next hour holding hands.

The technique of snowboarding is no more complex than the equipment. As Dix said, "the hard part is in your head; the physical side is easy". Body weight is all you have to play with, and the two edges (toe side, and heel side) are the only place on which you can usefully put it. Dix told me to face up the slope, keep my back straight, and bend my knees to put all my weight on the toe edge. He grasped my hands, and we danced across the slope. Dix

doing a soft-shoe shuffle as I slid sideways in a stuttering fashion, wiggling my bottom in an effort to hold the board on its edge and keep it moving.

Dix assured me that if I looked behind me, the weight transfer would lead to disaster.

STEPHEN WOOD

So I stared resolutely at the top of his shaven head as I edged back and forth across the slope, leaning sideways to move and straightening up at the end of each traverse to bring the board to a halt. So impressed was Dix with my "toe-edge" performance that he took me straight on to lesson two, in which I could

face down the slope.

We changed places, and instead of raising my heels as if I were wearing stiletto shoes I did an impression of a penguin, digging my heel edge into the snow and letting my toes flap in the air. We held hands for another dance, this time with Dix leading. After a while, I went solo: to get up speed on a traverse you have to twist your upper body sideways, and you can't do that when you're holding your partner's hands. Dix told me to take John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever* as my role model, and fling out my arm as I leaned forward in the direction of the traverse. It was embarrassing, but it worked.

I had expected snowboarding to be more difficult and more painful. With its gentle slope and consistent surface the Snowdome is a good place

to learn, so I gave it some credit for my gratifyingly successful debut. And presumably being a skier helped? Dix disagreed: "Skiers do come with an understanding of how edges work, but on average they don't learn any quicker than the others." Perhaps it was just natural talent, then – or beginner's luck.

OK, I've only clocked up an hour, and I can't turn round without sitting down. I've still got work to do, including on my calf muscles: with all that bending and stretching of the feet they take much more of a hammering than with skiing. And I must improve my technique for falling. I did hit the snow a couple of times, once on the treacherous rope tow and again when I lost my balance after skidding to a halt. Dix was kind enough to characterise the lat-

High hopes: Stephen Wood takes to the slopes after his first snowboarding lesson... if only Photograph: Allsport

ter as an emergency stop – but pointed out that I had utterly failed to adopt the falling position he had shown me at the beginning of the lesson.

I guess I need a bit more practice at falling. That will come, I suppose, once I get out on the mountains.

Snowboarding lessons at Snowdome (including entrance fee and equipment hire) cost from £22.50 per hour for groups, to £40 for individual tuition. Book lessons in advance on 0990 000011. The Snowdome is open from 9am to 11pm daily.

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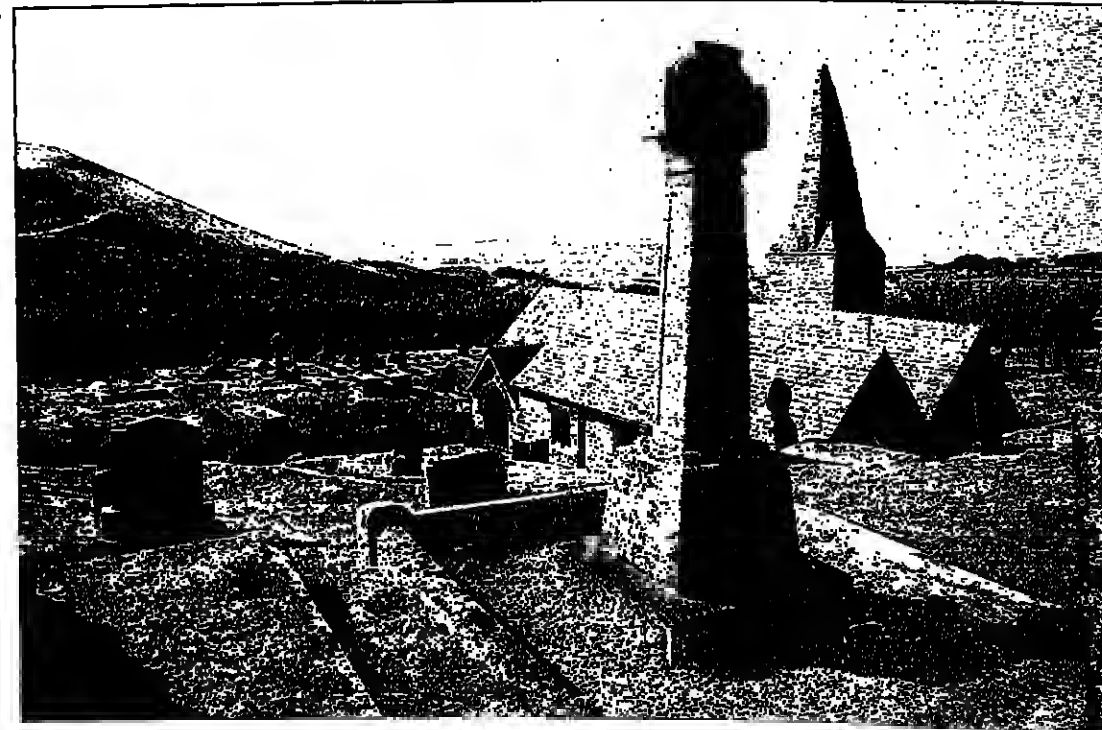
Take a shot at the photograph of the year

If you're an amateur photographer you could win a Nikon F70 SLR – and a commission from 'The Independent'.

Each Saturday, our travel pages carry thousands of words designed to inform and inspire the traveller, whether of the armchair or adventurer variety. We also use a few good photographs.

Our belief that there are many excellent amateur photographers among our readers was confirmed last year, when *The Independent* joined forces with *Wanderlust* magazine to stage our first Travel Photograph of the Year competition. The quality of the entries was outstanding and choosing an outright winner was difficult. The judges finally awarded Paul Gallagher (whose work appears right) first prize because of the excellence of his composition.

This year we have expanded the competition to four categories: The Natural World, Action, Face-to-Face and Black & White. We have also brought in one of the most famous names in photography: Nikon, the camera of choice for many of the 1996 entrants.



Padstow churchyard by last year's winner, Paul Gallagher

The top 40 entries will be displayed at Destinations '98, the travel exhibition to be held at London Olympia from 26 February to 1 March next year. All entrants will receive a free pass for two to the event – at which the winning photograph will be announced. It will earn its tak-

er valuable prizes, including one that money can't buy: a photographic commission from *The Independent*. Nikon will provide the winner with an F70 SLR with 35-80mm AF-D lens – worth more than £1,000 – while Bellingham will provide a 335 camera bag and Ventile

photo vest (total value £300-plus).

The three other category winners will each receive a Nikon F50 with 35-80mm lens, plus a Bellingham Photo Hadley bag. Readers with an address in the UK can enter at any time before the end of the year, but take

the first step now by sending in a stamped, addressed envelope for an application form, which includes the competition rules. The address is *Wanderlust* (Photo of the Year), PO Box 1832, Windsor SL4 6YP. Or complete the form in the current edition of *Wanderlust*.

What's an axolotl? Find out at the Secret World

At the Wildlife Rescue Centre near Highbridge in Somerset there are bats, ferrets, donkeys, badgers, and more badgers. Bridget McConville met them on a visit with her sons and their friends.

Never mind the badgers, what the children liked best were the "funny chickens with dangly bits". The dignified bronze turkey, its neck festooned with wobbly scarlet wattles, had them in fits. And so did the rare breed of bantams which lived in a hutch labelled "Polish". These sported bright pom-poms on their heads that my gang supposed were for "polishing" things.

But as we went around Secret World it became apparent that the average bunch of boys is pretty much underwhelmed by seeing wild creatures such as badgers and barn owls. "It would be good if there were a death slide or something," agreed Richard, aged nine. "It's good, but it's not very exciting," agreed Richard, aged 10.

Far more enthusiastic were the adult visitors, clearly impressed by the wildlife rescue work, by the beautiful 17th-century farmhouse, and by the welcoming café. Small children are in their element, too, what with Tika the (occasionally) talking parrot and a pen full of eel-like ferrets, not to mention calves, piglets, lambs, hedgehogs, donkeys, guinea-pigs, rabbits, axolotls (Mexican salamanders), slow-worms, tropical fish, bats, and bees.

New Road Farm is the home of Pauline and Derek Kidner and their family. Derek opened it to the public in 1984, and it still has the lived-in feel of a working farm, with Derek doing the afternoon milking. But it is Pauline's animal hospital and rescue centre for wild animals – especially badgers – that is the heart of Secret World.

This weekend is "Badger Weekend" at New Road Farm, an annual fun and fundraising extravaganza with ferret-racing, cake stalls, a tombola and other sideshows. Children can have their faces painted as "badgers", and can go for a special walk to meet all the animals that a badger might normally encounter on an evening foray.

Badger cubs aren't born until spring, but during our visit we saw Glade, an orphaned badger brought up by Pauline, with his two females Nippy and Foxglove, in their glass-backed underground chamber. They slumbered in a warm heap together, three bear-cub-sized bundles of earth-brown fur oblivious to our gaze – and to the boys' impolite remarks about badger odour.

Glade first came to the centre after his sett had been dug up, when he was a week old. Nippy arrived after being hit by a car; Foxglove was found wandering at six weeks old, after her mother had been killed on the road. All three are looking for "foster parents" to help meet the costs of the rescue centre.

Badgers, unfortunately, are not good at PR. During the same dry spell, many irate garden-lovers found their carefully watered lawns – havens for earthworms – in ribbons every morning, shredded by those powerful, digging forelegs.

Pauline is well aware of local hostility to badgers; after all, her husband is a farmer. "The law tells farmers what they can and can't do, so they get very cross. But they can apply for a licence to shut the sett down if they spot a problem developing. Often, foraging areas are taken for development and badgers resort to gardens for food."

As for the common perception that badgers can spread TB to cows, "so can cats, foxes, deer, rats and moles," she says. We all want healthy wildlife and livestock in our countryside, she argues, but rather than the annual official badger cull (2,500 are killed at a cost of £3,000 a head) she advocates blood-testing and vaccination of cows.

At Secret World Pauline makes sure that all badgers are healthy before being released into the wild, and this weekend members of Somerset's badger groups will be at New Road Farm to give talks and discuss these issues.

And there has been a happy ending to the story of Lady, the badger rescued from baiters. She turned out to be pregnant and, after giving birth to three cubs, was released back to the wild with her new family. In a reversal of their fortunes, the lorry driver was convicted of badger cruelty and went to prison for four months.

Secret World, New Road Farm, East Huntspill, High-



bridge, Somerset (01278 783250). Open daily 10am-6pm (or dusk if earlier). Closed 25 and 26 December. Family ticket £13; adults £4.25; children £2.95; OAPs £3.75; reduced rates November-March. 'Foster' a badger for £24.95, receiving Pauline Kidner's video 'Badgers In My Kitchen', a certificate and a six-monthly update.

Wild things: once they have recovered, most animals at Secret World are released back into their natural habitat

Photographs: John Voos

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ARE WE NEARLY THERE?

Wildlife outings for children

Beale Park, Reading, Berkshire (0188 984 5172)
This Thames-side wildlife park is home to many rare and endangered birds including flamingos, pheasants, cranes and owls. There's plenty for children to do if they get tired of bird watching. They can mingle with the animals in the pet

corner, visit the ponies or romp around in the adventure playground. If such activities fail to appeal, there's also a deer park. Open daily in the winter from 10am-5pm. Admission into the park is £2.50, children £1.50.

Howlett's Wild Animal Park, Canterbury, Kent (01227 72410)
Howlett's boasts of having the world's largest breeding

colony of gorillas. At the last count more than 50 gorillas had been born on the premises. Nurturing baby creatures is a skill here – you can also see up close Britain's most successful breeding herd of African elephants. On a stroll through the park, expect to see tigers, snow leopards, bison and free-running deer and antelope. Tickets are £7.99, £5.99 children, £24 family. Opens daily 10-5pm.

be on the lookout for wild horses, bison or red deer roaming in their own reserve. The main carnivores are fed at 2pm every day – there's a briefing from the feeders about the different animals. The walk-around area encompasses woodland and forest habitats with wolves, lynx and otters. Admission to the park ranges from £6-£18 (depending on the number of people in your car). Open daily from 10am-2pm.

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Centre, Washington, Northumbria (0191 416 5454)
Flamingos, grey herons, swans, geese, ducks galore – there are more than 1,200 wildfowl here, and at least 100 species. Children (and adults) can explore the Discovery Centre and visit the wildfowl nursery. This week there are also special half-term activities based around the culture of North American Indians – these include story-telling in the grounds and making feather head-dresses. Open daily 9.30am-4pm. Adults £4, children £2.40, family ticket (two adults, two children) £10.40.

Suffolk Wildlife Park - The African Adventure, Lowestoft, Suffolk (01502 740 291)
This park has brought the wilds of Africa to Britain. Colonies of leopards play among the trees on their own islands. Indeed, there are plenty of animals from Africa throughout the park such as African lions, cheetahs, and zebras. The park also has the only savannah in the country. Take the children on a free safari road train, on explorer trails, and to the bouncy castle. You can also see the animals' daily feeding. Park opens daily 10am. Admission: adults £5.50, children £3.50.

Highland Wildlife Park, Kingussie, Inverness-shire (01540 451 270)
On a drive through the park.

Anne Lundregan

THE INDEPENDENT CRUELTY OR CULTURE?



IN TURKEY BEARS ARE FORCED TO STAND ON HOT PLATES TO MAKE THEM 'DANCE'. TO FIND OUT WHY, READ OUR SPECIAL REPORT ON TUESDAY 28 OCTOBER.

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Who's eating all the fish?

Where have all the sea trout gone? Ask the disgruntled fishermen, and they all give the same answer: 'Killed by sea lice, every one'. And what produces a lethal concentration of sea lice in estuaries and sea lochs? 'Salmon farms,' they reply.

It is now nearly nine years since sea trout all but disappeared from the mid-west of Ireland, and a lucrative rural industry suddenly collapsed. Later, similar declines set in on the west coast of Scotland and in Norwegian rivers. Experts seeking to defend salmon farms pointed out that sea trout catches had been falling since the Fifties – 30 years before the first farms were established – and suggested other possible causes, not least acidification of rivers, brought about by careless planting of conifers which collect toxic substances from the atmosphere.

Yet now, after numerous investigations, Irish owners are convinced that they know what is happening. They believe that smolts – second-year sea trout, hatched in rivers – are healthy enough when they migrate down into the estuaries; but there, within days, they become infested with sea lice. These are so numerous that they literally eat the young trout alive; grazing all along their backs, they strip off the protective layer of mucus, and then the skin, until nothing remains of the dorsal fin but three bony spikes. Finally they bore into the back of the head.

Some fish turn tail within a few days and return to the river, presumably because they know instinctively that fresh water will kill the lice. The trouble is, there is no food for them in the river – which is why they migrated out to sea in the first place. They may have a second or third try at getting out, but in the end they die, either directly

In Ireland, rather than join forces in an attempt to solve the problem, fishery owners and farmers became polarised in separate camps, and bitter arguments raged. In 1995, goaded by the general refusal to admit responsibility, a group of owners on the west coast launched a major lawsuit against the Irish government and 10 salmon farming companies.

Their case against the state was (and is) that the government has allowed the farmers too much latitude, and failed to exercise its statutory responsibility to protect wild fish. The farmers are being sued for causing a nuisance, polluting the estuaries, and breaching the fishermen's constitutional right to make a living.

After preliminary hearings, the lawsuit has now reached the discovery stage, which is due to be heard in the High Court in Dublin next year. Leading the charge is Peter Mantle, owner of the Delphi fishery on the coast of Co Mayo. This small but famous and beautiful

tract of the farms on wild salmon, which have also declined sharply on much of the west coast of Scotland. Here the picture is less clear, because the habits of salmon and sea trout are different: whereas young trout remain in shallow water around the coast, salmon smolts head straight out into the ocean and stay in deep water for at least a year before returning to their native river to spawn. It is thus, in theory, less likely that they pick up lethal doses of sea lice from around salmon cages.

Nevertheless, by setting fine-mesh nets across the mouths of fjords the Norwegians have discovered that out-going salmon smolts do collect lice, and

Scotland, has recommended establishing a new, independent body to regulate all fish farming. Angling organisations are extremely keen that such a body should come into being: the Salmon & Trout Association, under its director Chris Poupard, has been lobbying intensively to have one set up, but so far has met with a "very negative" response.

"The last government took the farmers' side," says Mr Poupard. "They agreed that the farms may cause a problem, but claimed that many

Under threat: sea trout numbers are dwindling. The annual catch of one fishery in Ireland used to be 1,500 but is now 100. Photograph: Ardea



DUFF HART-DAVIS

from physical damage, or from secondary infections brought on by the removal of their protective layer.

This process is now clearly understood – and the phenomenon of prematurely returning, lice-infested sea trout has been found only in areas where there are marine salmon cages. It is also well known that salmon farms are besieged by sea lice, and that managers struggle ceaselessly with an ever-changing variety of chemicals to keep the parasites under control.

What nobody has been able to prove is that the lice which are killing trout derive from the farms – yet it seems beyond doubt that if cages containing hundreds of thousands of salmon are infested with parasites, the general level of lice in sea loch or estuary is bound to increase.

Part of the debate now is about the effect of the farms on wild salmon, which have also declined sharply on much of the west coast of Scotland. Here the picture is less clear, because the habits of salmon and sea trout are different: whereas young trout remain in shallow water around the coast, salmon smolts head straight out into the ocean and stay in deep water for at least a year before returning to their native river to spawn. It is thus, in theory, less likely that they pick up lethal doses of sea lice from around salmon cages.

Nevertheless, by setting fine-mesh nets across the mouths of fjords the Norwegians have discovered that out-going salmon smolts do collect lice, and

the presumption must be that huge numbers of them are being eaten to death at sea. Another problem is that of escapes or deliberate releases. In August, for instance, somebody cut the cages of a farm in Loch Torridon and let out 50,000 salmon. From traces of the artificial colouring used in farm feed, it has already been established that tame salmon go up rivers and spawn in the same redds (gravel beds) as wild fish. What effect does this have on instincts evolved over thousands of years? Do the offspring of farmed fish lack the ability to find their way back to a river, and do they somehow confuse their wild cousins?

In the past, licences for salmon farms in Scotland have been granted by the Crown Estate, but now a report on strategy, prepared by Lord Nixon for the Secretary of State for

complex factors were involved. We don't agree. We believe the central issue is sea lice."

There has been one bit of good news for the fishermen. Until now the east coast of Scotland has remained almost entirely free of farms, and the Crown Estate recently rejected an application to expand a small unit in the Cromarty Firth into a major enterprise producing 2,000 tons of salmon a year. "We objected to the proposal like crazy," says Mr Poupard, "because it would have affected a large number of east coast rivers. The significant thing is that one of the Crown Estate's reasons for refusing was the possible impact on wild fishery interests. It's the first time they have ever acknowledged this in turning down an application. There's a glimmer of hope on the horizon."

NATURE NOTE

With the harvest gone from the fields, and supplies of wild food dwindling in woods and hedges, rats have withdrawn into barns. Thoroughly unwelcome lodgers they are, too, for they carry unpleasant diseases such as leptospirosis, and their destructive capacity is astonishing. Not only do they chew their way into sacks of corn or potatoes; they also gnaw through wood and even burrow through the interstices of stonework. Once established under the floor or in the roof of a building, they are very hard to shift. They are also inveterate egg-stealers. They certainly roll chickens' eggs along the floor by pushing with their noses, to eat them in a place of safety. But do they carry eggs as well? Old country characters tell how one rat lies on its back, cradling the egg in all four legs, while another drags the live trolley off by the tail. True or false? I am never sure – but not for nothing do humans use the phrase "rat-like cunning".

Duff Hart-Davis

Global warming is feathering the nests

Good news this week from the Wildlife Trusts: little egrets are breeding in Britain. Daniel Butler examines the implications.

The little egret, a white, heron-like bird originally from the Mediterranean, was one of our rarest visitors until 1988 when small flocks began to be reported. Last year the first pair nested in Poole Harbour, and this year five pairs successfully reared 12 young.

The little egrets are not alone: several species, whether previously unknown or regarded as rare migrants, are now firmly established on our list of breeding birds. Cetti's warbler began breeding in Hampshire and the West Country in the Sixties. Although this small, drab bird of damp scrub is usually found only in southern Europe, today there are probably around 500 pairs in this country. What makes this all the more remarkable is that, unlike all but one of our remaining warblers, it overwinters here.

The greatest success story of all, however, is that of the collared dove. Until the Thirties the

nearest population was in the Balkans, but over the next 20 years numbers moved westwards, with the first British nest reported in 1955. Now this pigeon is widespread across almost all of England and lowland Scotland.

Elsewhere, previously scarce birds have notched up marked successes. Best known is the osprey, exterminated in the last century, which began to breed here again in the Fifties and now numbers almost 100 pairs. The hobby – a small, migratory falcon – is less familiar, but its numbers have risen from about 60 pairs in the Fifties to between 500 and 900 pairs today, while there are more than 100 pairs of marsh harriers (down to two pairs in the Fifties).

So why the sudden attraction of Britain? Global warming is the obvious answer, according to Chris Meade, who orchestrates the British Trust for Ornithology's authoritative census. "This could well be advance warning of climate change," he says sombrely. "Nature can be incredibly sensitive to even the slightest variations in temperature and rainfall." To back his case, he points out that records in diatoms that many birds across Europe are beginning to breed

up to a month earlier than they did 50 years ago.

The reason is that higher temperatures mean more food – and, in particular, insects – during the critical early weeks of the breeding season. Sure enough, the boom in new bird species has been echoed among invertebrates such as the median wasp

(first recorded here in 1988) and the yellow-winged darter (a southern European dragonfly, first recorded in 1995).

Changing land use is also responsible for some improvements. Although modernisation of agriculture has undoubtedly resulted in a drastic decline in pasture-loving skylarks and

grey partridges, where there are losers there are also winners. One clear beneficiary is the collared dove, which has used the recent shift to cereals to colonise farmyards where it feeds on spilt grain.

Other land changes have helped the hobby: "Although hobbies live mainly on insects

such as dragonflies, which do better with warmer weather, their increase may well be to do with the construction industry, which has led to more gravel pits and hence more hunting grounds," says Meade.

But although all these factors may be at work in southern England, none of them appears to

explain the sudden arrival of northern visitors such as the Lapland bunting, formerly regarded as an occasional winter migrant fleeing particularly hard Arctic weather.

The purple sandpiper is another recent arrival from the north, first breeding in Caithness in 1978. Today there are probably

Born in Britain: this year five pairs of little egrets have successfully reared 12 young in this country. Photograph: Ardea



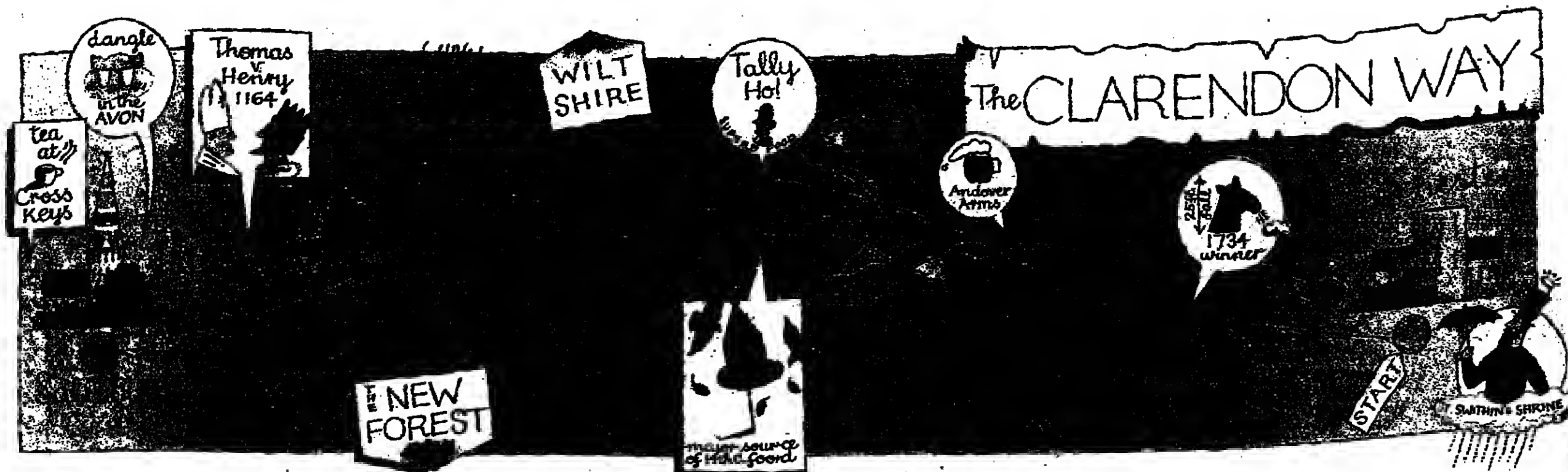
half-a-dozen pairs, but Scotland has plenty of potentially suitable habitats, and bird-watchers throughout the country are hopeful that they will soon become firmly established.

"Global warming doesn't necessarily mean higher temperatures across the whole of Britain," counters Meade. He goes on to explain that many scientists believe that as Antarctica thaws, the meltwater could shift the Gulf Stream westwards. At the moment this keeps Scotland warmer than similar latitudes elsewhere.

Nonetheless, Meade admits that rising mercury cannot be the whole answer. He says improved counting methods are leading to more reports of rarities. Also, raptors have undoubtedly benefited from a change in attitudes among gamekeepers, while all birds have been helped by legal protection and a decline in egg-collecting and taxidermy.

In spite of this, he believes that global warming is by far the most important factor. Assuming he is right, it should serve to remind us that whereas climate change has terrifying implications for man, many wild creatures will undoubtedly benefit.

12/SPARE TIME



Sally Kindburg

Just keep your eye on the bishop's hat

A historic path links the cathedral cities of Winchester and Salisbury. Mork Rowe makes a pilgrim's progress along the 27-mile Clarendon Way.

It is possibly Britain's least trodden short-distance path, yet the Clarendon Way links two of England's most picturesque cathedral cities and gives classic views of rolling countryside. The walk gets its name from Clarendon Palace, a medieval seat of power three miles outside Salisbury where, in 1164, Henry II hosted a council that sparked an early skirmish in the battle between crown and church. Thomas Becket - killed just six years later - was present at the meeting.

The route starts at Winchester cathedral and finishes in the delightful grounds of its

counterpart in Salisbury. From cathedral door to cathedral door is 27 miles but progress is not physically demanding: apart from one or two short, sharp climbs, the Way lumbers gently over downs with little puff required. Nevertheless, it is best negotiated over two days, with a range of excellent pubs and B&Bs available en route.

In Winchester we started by inspecting the shrine of St Swithun in the 11th-century cathedral. (Legend has it that if it rains on St Swithun's day, 15 July, it will rain for 40 days more). After a march up Winchester town centre past the hospital, we turned right into Kiln Lane and were almost immediately in the country, walking past a golf course, then a stud farm, following the route symbol of a bishop's hat. After two hours we came to Farley Mount country park.

The path dives into woods and out on to open fields before climbing abruptly up

to Beacon Hill, at 174m the highest point of the route. Here we came across a triangular monument bizarre enough to agitate the imagination of an *X-Files* addict: it has terrestrial, though curious, origins, marking the burial place of a horse that in 1733 tumbled 25 feet into a local quarry. Both horse and rider survived to win a race the following year, while carrying the name Beware Chalk Pit. The monument gives fine views in all directions; Winchester is already five miles east, tucked away in the valley behind the country park.

The path then drops swiftly, giving far-reaching views of ploughed fields, farmhouses, sheep, pigs, and trees buddled together on gentle hills. A short stretch goes through a horse-jumping field. After four hours you come to the village of King's Somborne, where welcome drinks can be downed in the friendly Andover Arms.

There are two paths out of King's Somborne, which both pick up the Clarendon Way: we unwittingly chose the least used one, fighting our way through brambles. Soon we crossed the River Test, where "Private Fishing" notices met our every turn. We then passed from trout to trotters, walking by pig battery farms. Plaintive squealing from the huts was, I am ashamed to say, not enough to strike bacon from the next day's full English breakfast.

The Clarendon Way then dropped down off the brow of a hill, crossed a ford at Wallop brook and led us into Broughton, a pretty village of half-timbered cottages and Georgian brick houses, where we spent the night. The food and local drink at the Tally Ho pub are superb; do not miss the circular medieval dovecote in the churchyard of St Mary's, where pigeons were bred in the 14th century as a major source of food.

The next day's walk is straightforward though you must keep a sharp eye out for the bishop's mitre sign on the short climb out of Broughton: if you pass the reservoir to your right rather than on your left you will go seriously astray. At Buckholt Farm we picked up the old Roman way and made fast progress to the village of Middle Winterslow, where again you must hunt around for the route waymarkings. At the village of Pitton we plunged into the dense woods of the Clarendon estate. After a couple of miles of conifers we arrived at Clarendon Palace - an overgrown wall is all that remains of a royal hunting-lodge for Norman kings and a mansion for the Plantagenets.

We emerged from the woods to see the spire of Salisbury cathedral poking above the small hills. It takes an hour from the first sight of the cathedral to reach its doors, where we were faced with an agony of in-

decision: should we flake out in the grounds of the cathedral, or visit the Cross Keys tea shop? Unable to choose, we did both, and recommend you to do the same.

A one-way train ticket from Salisbury to Winchester costs £8.40. Buses between the cities do not run on Sundays in winter. If driving, do not run on Kiln Lane in Winchester as long-term parking in the town centre is difficult and expensive; this cuts 1.5 miles off the route. The walk is outlined in Lonely Planet's 'Walking in Britain', sketch map and route details also from Winchester Tourist Information (01962 840500). B&Bs in Broughton and King's Somborne can be booked from Winchester; Salisbury Tourist Information Centre (01722 334956) is also helpful. Maps: OS maps 184 and 185 are recommended to cope with poor waymarking from Broughton to Salisbury.

GAMES

BAWN O'BEIRNE RANELAGH DON'T JUNK IT - USE IT

Only one pair of pliers, two corks and three wire coat-hangers are needed for this week's piece of recycled junk. Here, in good time for Halloween or bonfire night, is how to make a

toasting fork.

1. Take your

three coat-

hangers and

cut off the

question-

mark

shaped

hooks to

leave three

pieces that may be

straightened easily.

2. Straighten them easily.

3. Put one of the straight pieces aside

and make two right-angled bends in

each of the others, one about three



inches from the end, the other about two inches further down. They will be the two outer prongs.

4. Cut the third, straight wire to the same length as the two bent ones.

5. Use fuse wire to

tie them all

together in the

desired fork shape.

6. For the handle,

use two

champagne corks

with a hole drilled

through them

lengthwise.

Thread the corks

onto the handle.

You now have the perfect

implement for making toast, roasting

marshmallows, or scaring trick-or-

treaters away from the door.

GAME OF THE WEEK WILLIAM HARTSTON

One important criterion for assessing the merit of any family game is the simplicity of its rules. One really does not want to have to fight through pages of instructions before starting. By that standard, the "Really Nasty Horse Racing Game" from Upstart! did not look promising. The rules occupied two sides, printed small on an A4-sized sheet. But they are clearly-written, not too difficult to grasp, and well worth the effort.

The format of the game is a horse-race in which each player (from two to six) moves his horse round a track according to the throws of a dice. So far, it's ludo, but what gives the Really Nasty Horse Racing Game its edge is the penalty cards which you can play against other players' horses - or your own, if you want to - and the opportunity to bet on the result of

each race, bets may be placed either on your own horse, or on that of one other player.

Players may select which horse from their stable runs in each race, a dice throw determines which lane it runs in, and both those factors combine to determine the odds offered on the horse.

"Be as nasty as possible to your fellow players!" it says in the rules, and that's what makes it such fun. My nasty children loved knocking each other's horses out of the race. James - going for death or glory - always bet on his own horse: Nicholas - the aleatorically advantaged one - won most of the races; and - best of all - I ended up with most money, because I generally had the good sense to bet on Nicholas's horse.

The Really Nasty Horse Racing Game, £29.99 from Upstart!

PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Charles Saumarez Smith, 43, director of the National Portrait Gallery, London

My mother liked us to enter the mothers-and-sons' race, which was an important fixture at the school sports day. I can't remember if we were tied together or not, but she was extremely athletic, having won a Cambridge blue in both hockey and tennis, so we were always expected to win. She was immensely proud that we won when she was 50, and she was able to go into honourable retirement.

I was brought up to play all sorts of competitive games. The worst was called Billiard Fives, a lethal game played by large numbers of people on a full-sized billiard table. You take turns in hurling the ball at the cushion at the far end, then you run around the table and are out if the ball is allowed to touch the near cushion. It ends when there are only two people left.

I wasn't tremendously good at games. I played in the teams at prep school, but let the side down in cricket. I was made wicket

keeper because I was so bad at throwing, and was opening bat at a match when we were all out for three. I don't think we won at all when I was in the First Eleven, which was embarrassing. When I went to Marlborough, I gave up almost all competitive games, because at the time, I was too short.

I run round Canary Wharf occasionally, and recently I went on a long walk with two friends along Offa's Dyke. We started at Chesham on the day after the election and arrived at Kington four days and 80 miles later. After the first day I was completely exhausted, but by the third day, I was able to walk from Lanthony Abbey over the Black Mountains to Hay-on-Wye, arriving in time for lunch.

As part of the forthcoming millennium celebrations, the National Portrait Gallery, in conjunction with the Sports Ministry, is planning an exhibition on the development of sport in Britain, including portraits of every sporting hero of the 20th century.

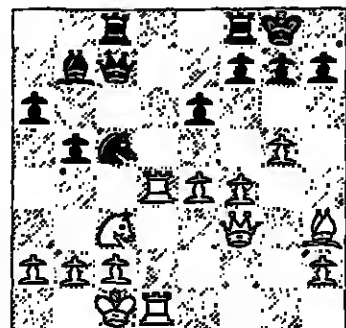
CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

Apart from leading the London Grandmasters event in Hampstead after six rounds, Neil McDonald also has the more dubious distinction of having lost the best game of the event so far.

In the old main line of the Najdorf Sicilian, before everyone started hunting down poisoned pawns with 7... Qb6, players used automatically to rattle out the first ten moves of this game, then continue 11.Bxd6 Nxf6 12.g5 Nd7. Rowson's choice of 11... Bxf6! is an extraordinary idea offering White the choice of two attractive continuations. First, there must be a strong temptation to give up a piece for three pawns with 13.Bxb5 axb5 14.Ndxh5 Qh8 15.Nxd6+ Ke7, though the activity of the bishop on f6 and rook on a8 give Black undeniable counterplay.

McDonald chose what he probably thought was a simpler path with 12.g5 inviting Black back into the main line with 12... Be7. Rowson, however, surprised him exchanging his bishop for the knight on d4 and abandoning his d6-pawn. The point became clear after 16... Nc5 (threatening both Nxe4 and b4) 17.Rd4 (see diagram) when Black regained his pawn with the neat 17... Nxe4!

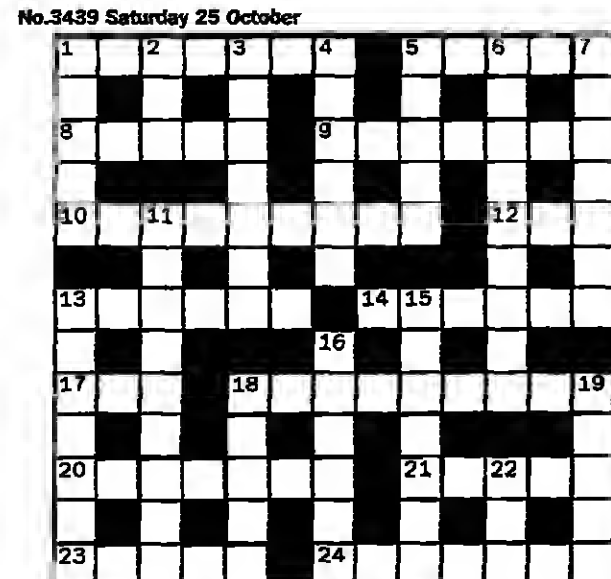
White cannot capture with his knight because of mate on c2, and 18.Rxe4 b4! left both the knight on c3 and rook on e4 helplessly rooted to their spots. Black's 20... Be4 gave added value, since 21.Rxe4 loses to 21... Qb7 22.Rd1 Qxb2+ 23.Kd1 Qb1+ 24.Ke2 Qxc2+ 25.Kf1 Qx2+ 26.Kxf2 c2.



As the game went, White was always struggling, but he almost rejoined the game with a nice temporary queen sacrifice. His hopes, however, were squashed by the accurate 38... Be4!

White: Neil McDonald
Black: Jonathan Rowson
Sicilian Defence
1 e4 c5 24 Ra4 Rfd8
2 Nf3 d6 25 Qe3 Rxd3
3 d4 Nf6 26 Qxd3 Bb5
4 Nc3 cxd4 27 Bg2 e5
5 Nxd4 a6 28 Qh3 Qc5
6 Bg5 e6 29 Qxc8+ Qxc8
7 f4 Be7 30 Rxa5 cxd4
8 Qf3 Qe7 31 Ra8 Qxa8
9 0-0-0 Nbd7 32 Bxa8 Be2
10 g4 b5 33 a4 f3
11 Bxf6 Bxf6 34 b4 f2
12 g5 Bxd4 35 Bg2 Kf8
13 Rxd4 Bb7 36 h5 f1=Q+
14 Bb3 0-0 37 Bxf1 Bxf1
15 Rh1 Rac8 38 Kb1 Be4
16 Rxd6 Nc5 39 b6 Ba6
17 R6d4 Nxe4 40 Ka2 Ke7
18 Rxe4 b4 41 Kf3 Kd6
19 Qf2 bxc3 42 Ra8 Kc6
20 Rb4 Be4 43 a5 f5
21 b3 Qe7 44 gxf6 gxf6

CONCISE CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Perception (7)
2 Intended (5)
3 Public square (5)
4 Lasting (7)
5 Boaster (9)
6 Involuntary twitch (3)
7 Of present or recent date (6)
8 Object to (6)
9 And not (3)
10 Agreed view (9)
11 Balkan country (7)
12 Picture (5)
13 European language (5)
14 Playhouse (7)

DOWN
1 Drive (5)
2 Body of water (3)
3 Language text-book (7)
4 Monotony (6)
5 Wetland (5)
6 Seabird (9)
7 Sweet substance (7)
8 First application of paint (9)
9 Threatened (7)
10 Exact (7)
11 Young child (6)
12 Snag (5)
13 Quarrel (5)
14 Deed (3)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:
ACROSS: 1 Press, 4 Krypton (Prescription), 8 Redwood, 9 Merit, 10 Opera, 11 Annals, 13 Cope, 15 Rhythm, 17 Wheeze, 20 Iota, 22 Digests, 24 Speed, 26 Exult, 27 Leisure, 28 Matador, 29 Hates, DOWN: 1 Parlour, 2 Endue, 3 Stormch, 4 Kidnap, 5 Yemcon, 6 Terrace, 7 Notes, 12 Newt, 14 Omit, 16 Yoghurt, 18 Hashish, 19 Endless, 21 Ostler, 22 Dream, 23 Sated, 25 Erupt.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

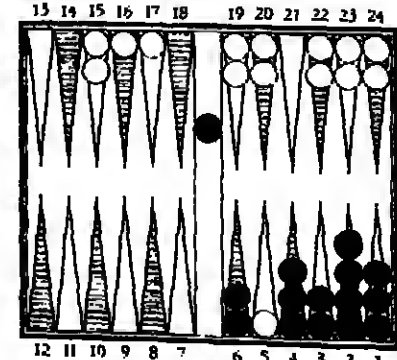
Game all dealer North
North
♠ A 3
♥ K J 9 4
♦ A K Q 10 5
♣ 7 2
West
♠ Q 10 9 4
♥ A
♦ J 9 7 4
♣ J 10 9 8
East
♠ 7 5
♥ Q 10 7 6 2
♦ 8 6 3
♣ A 4 3
South
♠ K J 8 6 2
♥ 8 5 3
♦ 2
♣ K Q 6 5

West found a neat shot in defence on this deal and successfully persuaded declarer to abandon a winning line of play in favour of a losing one.

North opened 1♠. South responded 1♠, and North reversed with 2♥. Unsure of the best resting spot, South bid 3♥ (the fourth suit) and North, with no guard in clubs, gave preference to spades. Now South tried 3NT and, with only two spades, North passed.

West led ♠ J against Three No-trumps. East won with his ace and returned ♠ 4 to South's king. Declarer continued with the three top diamonds, then gave West a trick with his jack. (A better percentage play would have been to take a first-round finesse of the ten.) It would have been easy for West to play another club at this point, with ♥ A as a sure entry, but he looked further ahead. After winning the club, declarer would be almost sure to try a heart for the ninth trick and would succeed when the ace appeared. The only chance was to divert South's attention from the heart suit and make him believe that the spade finesse was right. With this in mind, West switched to ♠ 10! South could not let this run to the tenace without blocking the suit. Convinced that East held ♠ Q, he played ♠ A from dummy, cashed the good diamond, and finessed ♠ J. West won with ♠ Q and reverted to clubs to establish the setting trick while he still held ♥ A.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



Here's another deceptive problem which came up at the Double Fives club the other evening. White has just hit the blot that Black left on his 11-point and Black has compounded his problems by dancing (backgammon-speak for staying on the bar). White now redoubles. Should Black take or pass?

I was in the box playing with a partner (in a cboquette with more than five players it is normal for the box to take one of the other players as a partner to offset some of the risk). My first inclination was to take. After all the race is 66 pips to 91, a healthy lead. My partner, however, had already reached for the scoresheet to score it as a drop. I studied the position more deeply.

The lead of 25 pips is misleading for a number of reasons: we are on the bar and may not enter for some time; we have already buried extra men on our 1- and 2-points which, as we have seen before, distorts the pip count; White has 8 rolls (45, 54, 46, 64, 56, 65, 63, 66) which make his 4-point next roll and if he doesn't make it this time he will be threatening to do so on each subsequent move.

In addition to having to revise my thoughts about the pip count, I also considered that even if I came in straight away I was likely to be giving White a double or triple shot at my escaping man. White's strategy here, if he can't make his 4-point, is to make points in his outer board as he brings his men around. All in all, it didn't look as if I could win the required 25 per cent of the games, so reluctantly I passed.

Later analysis with the assistance of Jellyfish proved that passing was correct. This position indicates once again how rare it is to be able to take a double when on the bar facing a 5-point board.

The toughest chain reactions

For a sport that has apparently boomed so big for so long, mountain biking is due to take off soon. Real mountain biking, that is, says Eric Kendall.

"Getting air", that bad feeling when your tyres lose contact with the ground, is a seminal moment on a mountain bike. You suddenly find that your wheels aren't just for rolling on, and that biking isn't one notch up from pedestrianism, but one notch down from manned space flight. And if leaving the earth's surface is half the fun, landing is the other.

This is the world that titanium frames, full suspension and tractor tyres were made for: bairy drop-offs, inclines of mountain goat severity, surfaces that shake your fillings loose, and pure, unadulterated speed. Looking before you leap means you'll never go, so don't look.

Real mountain biking is rather different from the tame feats many might imagine. To every Fulham farmer cluttering the streets in a four-wheel drive, there are 10 mountain bike riders who never see single tracks, gloopy mud, or an incline steeper than a kerbstone. No wonder people are always asking why they've got so many gears.

There's nothing wrong with bridle paths, farmae or potholes, but the thrill of a truly mad descent is unbeatable. The downhill race circuit, the most extreme branch of mountain biking, tours alpine resorts for prolonged rider and spectator thrills. But you can find steep stuff in most parts of Britain, too, where only you and a few sheep will know if you bottled it. Only the length of run will be lacking, so a day's ride will involve many ups as well as downs, making this a sport for the fittest.

But, unlike some endurance activities that take place against a backdrop of wild scenery, biking carries all the risks of a real-life adventure, with the potential to get a long way from anywhere and little in the way of back-up and safety nets other than on the competition circuit. It's like downhill skiing, without a St Bernard or a *pitou* for miles.

If you want to minimise the uphills and have a degree of support, that can be arranged. Most of the accessible mountainous corners of the earth are now biked by groups, using four-wheel drives to reach the heights and as back-up in the event of punctures - of the lung, skull or inner tube. No question about it, this is territory for helmets - and body armour, too, under race conditions.

If all of this puts you off even more than the thought of giving way to riders and ramblers back on the bridle paths, the technical stuff may appeal. Trial-type riding needs less nerve for speed and a minimal head for heights until you reach world-class, bus-hopping levels.

The right terrain is all around, where

ever you live; obstacles can be found on the street or in the hills. Yet out on the trail, the challenge of balancing at minimal speed takes on a practical aspect, helping to keep your feet dry during stream crossings and taking the pain out of the uphills. Wobbling and weaving up a boulder-strewn path will make you cross-eyed with concentration, suppressing all other sensations.

With the cool shades and laid-back West Coast style, what can't escape anyone's attention is that mountain biking is like, you know, an image thing, man. This may constitute more of a barrier to non-hip over-25-year-olds than any of the mud, sweat and gears perception of riding bikes through soggy countryside.

But it's worth enduring the scene, just to get your hands and feet on the latest technology - not just for its performance, but for the crazy stunts you'll feel obliged to pull.



There's no getting away from it: this is simply an adult version of the games that kids play the moment they shed stabilisers. It just hurts more when you fall off, and it's more fun, too.

What you need

About £300 is the starting-point for a good mountain bike. Cheaper ones have heavy frames and poor components which won't work well for long. Take care with second-hand "bargains" - the bike may look good, but if a frame has been stacked and then straightened out, it's worthless.

Lightest and easiest uphill are "rigid" bikes, but front suspension bikes (hardtails) cushion front-end hits and improve control in the rough, which makes them ideal for mixed riding. For downhill, try full suspension.

Other essentials include a helmet. These are a bit like bikinis: the more you pay, the less you get and the better it looks. Around £30 gets you a "mushroom head", which is less ventilated and heavier than its sleeker, pricier counterparts. Mitts or

gloves are vital for protection - even during the classic "face plant" over the handlebars, your hands are likely to hit the deck before any other bits. Eye protection is also important against glare at altitude and mud at ground level. Before hitting the trail, a map (and sometimes a compass) is vital, too. Lycra shorts aren't.

An alternative to buying all the gear you need at the outset is to hire it and try it out, or go on a guided trip with a company that supplies quality equipment as part of the package.

Where to go

Most of Britain has good riding, but the classic rides are around the biggest hills. Head for Wales, the Lake and Peak Districts and Scotland. There are also excellent rides in areas such as the Cotswolds. Try Compass Holidays in Cheltenham (01242 250642) for quality bike hire and superb food; guided rides are also available. Other hiking com-

panies include Bikes Beddgelert, Snowdonia (01766 890434); Red Kit Mountain Bikes, Llanwrtyd Wells (01591 610236); Cairnwell Mountain Sports, Glenshee (01250 885255); and Bideford Bicycle Hire, Devon (01237 424123). Check the classified ads in the mountain biking press, such as *MBUK* and *Mountain Biker International*, for details of biking weekends/holidays, including overseas trips.

Bikes are permitted on bridleways as marked on Ordnance Survey maps, but not on footpaths. Much of the more extreme terrain is underused by walkers and horse and bike riders, so the issues of access that rumble between the various factions can usually be avoided by going the extra mile and getting away from it all. This is not the case in areas heavily used by tourists, and some special restrictions (including voluntary bans at certain times on Snowdon) may apply to some routes.

Bike shops are a good source of information on access, and on local clubs with regular rides.



Splashing out and riding high: real mountain biking is an adult version of the games that kids play the moment they shed stabilisers
Photographs: AK (above left) and Peter Grant

How to develop a great nose

Learning about wine is a palatable pleasure, but where do you begin? Anthony Rose, wine correspondent of *'The Independent'*, gives a guide to the courses on offer.

The luxurious Ecole du Vin at Château Loundenne in Bordeaux was my induction into wine schools, and launched me into wine journalism. It was not a bad place to start. Still run by the debonair Master of Wine, Charles Eve, my tutor a decade ago, the Ecole is one of the more exotic entries in the voluminous list of wine courses on offer in the monthly publication, *Wine Magazine* (£2.95). Geographical limitations aside, choosing a wine course is,

of course, very much a matter of practicalities. Ask yourself how much time and money you are prepared to invest, and what you want from a wine course. Some offer individual sessions; most cater for different levels of knowledge, ranging from beginners, through intermediate, to advanced.

There are adult education classes, specialist courses run by individuals, auction houses and independent schools, tutored tastings and workshops run by wine merchants, not to mention the *de luxe* French model where you can drink in not just the produce of the grape, but the ambience of the vineyard *in situ*.

A beginner's course should give you a grounding in wine-tasting technique and description and an idea of how grape varieties and wine styles fit into regions and countries. At



intermediate to advanced levels, you'll find more detailed information with in-depth techniques on, for instance, blind tasting, and specialist wine trade-related topics such as wine service.

Whatever level you're at, look for a course that makes learning about wine a pleasure and not a chore. So in addition to making sure that the course offers up-to-date information and ample scope for wine-tasting, try, if you can, to find one where there's an element of humour and unstuffiness on offer. There should be no room at the wine bar for the po-faced approach. Here are a handful of suggestions.

Winewise, 107 Cufford Road, London N1 4HL (0171-254 9734): £135 for six evening sessions for Beginners Wine-tasting Course, £200 for Fine Wine Course. From the basement of his Islington home, Michael Schuster runs a beginner's and a fine wine course for up to 20 people, along with individual tasting sessions. Michael's wife, Monika, a fine cook, provides accompanying morsels of food. Schuster is an

experienced palate and writer, and also a relaxed communicator with insight.

Leith's School of Food & Wine, 21 St Alban's Grove, London W8 5BP (0171-229 0177): £206.99 for five two-hour evening sessions. The evening Certificate in Wine course stands alone from Leith's cooking courses, although with Caroline Waldegrave at the helm, there is inevitably a food and wine skew. There are also daytime wine lectures for beginners, intermediate and advanced levels as part of an annual diploma course.

The Scale School of Wine, PO Box LB 740, London W14 9LB (0171-281 3040): £159 for five two-hour sessions. Higher course, £179 for seven sessions plus one-off evening topics. Tim Hall was a journalist and teacher, so he communicates well with his class, which runs to a maximum of 26. Plenty of room here for lively exchanges and self-expression, as I found when I gave one of the sessions. A course with attitude.

Christie's, 63 Old Brompton Road, London SW7 3JS (0171-581 3933): £170 for five

two-hour evening sessions. **Sotheby's**, Aeolian Hall, Bloomfield Place, London W1Y 9FA (0171-408 5051): £175 for five two-hour evening sessions.

Two-hour evening sessions. **Sotheby's**, Aeolian Hall, Bloomfield Place, London W1Y 9FA (0171-408 5051): £175 for five two-hour evening sessions.

Dust down the pinstripes; adjust the twinset and pearls. There's still an aura of the old school tie about both these institutions, whose courses lead to be run by Masters of Wine. Christie's focus is on France. Sotheby's also emphasises the time-honoured classic regions, but with both a varietal and a regional course, it ventures intrepidly into the New World, too. Lecturers occasionally have had plums removed from the mouth.

The Wine & Spirit Education Trust, Five Kings House, 1 Queen Street Place, London EC3R 1QS. Based in London, Birmingham, Nottingham, and Burton-on-Trent (0171-236 3551): £145 for seven two-hour sessions for beginners. £270 for 14 two-hour modules at Higher Certificate level. Fees include the exam.

The WSET is the wine trade's school, although it has recently opened the cellar door to the public. There's a slight old-fashioned bias towards the Old World, but the Trust also offers competent basic grounding in a wide range of consumer and trade topics including spirits. Get the Certificate and you're on the first rung of the ladder to being a Master of Wine.

The Wine Education Service, 112 Hoppers Road, London N21 3LH: Courses in

London, Oxford, Preston, Leeds, Bolton and Edinburgh. **Phil Cooper** (0181-886 0304): £155 for 10 two-hour evening sessions. Run by an ex-Wine & Spirit Education Trust lecturer, these are sessions run by Phil Cooper and members of the Association of Wine Educators. The syllabus is similar to that of WSET, but covers wine topics only and has greater emphasis on tasting. Up to 24 people per session.

Recommended wine merchants and useful numbers: **Bibendum**, 113 Regent's Park Road, London NW1 8UR (0171-722 5377); **Lay & Wheeler**, The Wine Centre, Gosbecks Park, Colchester CO2 9JT (01206 713526); **Roberson**, 348 Kensington High Street, London W14 8NS (0171-371 2121); **La Vigneronne**, 105 Old Brompton Road, London, SW7 7LE (0171-589 6113); **Justerini & Brooks**, 45 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2HT (0131-226 4202); **La Reserve**, 56 Walton Street, London SW3 1RB (0171-589 2020); **Ecole du Vin**, Château Loundenne, Bordeaux (01279 626801); **Association of Wine Educators** (0181-995 2277).

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Hern's life and career speak of greatness

There are only two more weeks to savour the talent of Major Dick Hern before he retires at the end of the Flat season. Today, one of the century's outstanding trainers of the thoroughbred racehorse sends out runners at his local course, Newbury, for the final time.

"It's all in the form book, isn't it?"

As a response to a request for an interview, it is about as much as you can expect of Major Dick Hern. The depth of talent in the man who has trained 53 Group One winners in Britain in the last 40 years is matched only by his visceral reluctance to discuss them with journalists, and even now, as a brilliant career draws towards its close, his allergy to microphones and notebooks is as pronounced as ever. In the soundbite age, this means that there is barely a punter or racegoer in the country who knows anything more about Hern than the names of his best horses, and that he has trained from a wheelchair since breaking his neck in a hunting accident 13 years ago.

Which is a shame, because those who know Hern well would not recognise the sullen Major the public sees. When confronted with someone who seems impossibly aloof, so they say, the best remedy is to imagine them locked in a lavatory, and in the case of Hern, his oldest friend can assist. Michael Pope met Hern when they served together during the War in the desert and in Italy, and gave him his first job in a racing yard, as his assistant trainer for five years from 1952.

"I had a horse running in a selling hurdle at Warwick and I thought he'd win and wanted to have a good bet on him," Pope says. "But I said to Dick, the trouble is, I know so many people when I get to Warwick, and they'll all want to know what's going on, so it's better if you go and saddle the horse, then hide, and don't appear again until you hear the bell ring for the jockeys to get up. Dick went and sat in the loo, and he said it seemed like it was an age he was sat there, with nothing to read except a timetable of trains from London to Birmingham. He said that by the

time he came out, he practically knew them by heart."

It almost goes without saying that the horse won – "and at a nice price, too" – but as Pope also points out, "soon after that he started training himself, and it wasn't long before he was winning Classics, not selling plates at Warwick." Hern moved to Newmarket in 1957 to train privately for Major Lionel Holliday, and sent out his first Classic winner, Hethersett in the St Leger, five years later. A year after that, he moved to the West Ilsley yard from where he was to secure his place in turf history.

Brigadier Gerard, Dufferrine, Bustino, Petoski, Troy, Henbit, Nashwan, Sun Princess and Dayjur were just a few of the horses to emerge from Hern's stable during the next two decades, a roll-call which is all the more extraordinary when you consider the obstacles which fate frequently placed in his way.

He has survived no fewer than three desperate reverses, any one of which might have persuaded a lesser man to hand in his licence. There was the hunting accident in 1984 which those who knew him felt had been waiting to happen. "He was a hard man to hounds," Pope says. "I always used to say to him, pull up a bit, Dick, you'll have a bad fall one of these days, but he just loved it."

Then, in 1988, he underwent vital heart surgery. "I went to see him in hospital in London," his friend recalls, "and I wouldn't have given him 48 hours."

And finally, just a few months later in March 1989, Lord Carnarvon, the Queen's



Hern: 'A tough man, but one who loves people and life and who has a great sense of humour'

wan and many of Hern's finest horses, remembers. "He was virtually told that he couldn't do the job any more and that he wasn't wanted and they would find somebody better. So he brings out a horse, first time up in a Classic, and wins. What more of an advert could you have for a trainer? That is a master craftsman at his best."

Carson, like Pope, has seen the private face of Hern. "He's a very jovial man, but when he's racing it's like he's at the office," the jockey says, while for Pope he is "the exact opposite of what people see, a man who loves people and life, with a great sense of humour. He's tough, mind you, and he stands for no nonsense, but all his staff worship him, and many of them have been with him for God knows how long."

One of those is Marcus Tregoning, a Hern employee for 14 years and the man who will inherit the training licence at the yard which Hamdan Al Maktoum built from scratch to give Hern a new home when he left

West Ilsley. "A few years ago, I was thinking, I've done five years with the Major, I really ought to move on and broaden my experience," Tregoning says, "but quite honestly I couldn't think of anyone else I'd rather work for. He's got a sort of sixth sense which allows him to see things which ordinary people don't, and particularly in the latter years, his training triumphs have been nothing short of a miracle. It's been great fun and he's taught me so much."

Including, it seems, an interesting line in bawdy songs. "He's got the great ability to remember anything that rhymes," Tregoning says, "so he's got a lot of songs that he learned in the army and he loves to sing at parties. He always holds the attention with his repertoire."

It is a difficult image to reconcile with that of the trainer with barely a word to say for himself even in victory. The conclusion, though, is clear. Major Dick Hern has got it badly wrong – it most definitely is not all in the form book.

HERN'S PLACE AMONG THE CLASSIC TRAINERS

Most Classic wins since 1900		2,000		1,000 Derby Oaks Leger		
21	Alec Taylor (1905-27)	4	1	3	8	5
19	Fred Darling (1916-47)	5	2	7	2	3
	Noel Murless (1948-73)	2	6	3	5	3
	Henry Cecil (1975-97)	2	5	3	5	4
16	Vincent O'Brien (1967-84)	4	1	6	2	3
	Dick Hern (1962-95)	2	2	3	3	6
15	Frank Butters (1927-48)	1	1	2	6	5
13	Cecil Boyd-Rochford (1933-58)	1	3	1	2	6

HERN'S GREAT HORSES

Brigadier Gerard: Winner of 17 of his 18 races including a record 13 Group races and memorable defeat of Mill Reef in 1971 2000 Guinees. Probably the best rider, along with Tudor Minstrel, since World War II, but able to win King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes over 'im 4f. Bustino: The St Leger winner of 1978 is best remembered for his bravery in forcing Grundy to give all in the 'Race of the Century', the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes of 1975. Established record for Epsom's mile and a half which lasted until Lammtarra's Derby win of 1995. Dayjur: Dazzlingly fast winner of all Europe's top sprints in 1980 and would have conquered America too but for jumping a shadow with victory seemingly assured in Breeders' Cup Sprint. Dunfermline: Only horse to beat dual Arc winner Alleged when winning St Leger of 1977. That was her second Classic as she had also won the Oaks, both wins coming in Silver Jubilee year of her owner, the Queen. Nashwan: Galloped opponents into the ground in 2000 Guinees, Derby, Eclipse Stakes and King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes of 1989. Troy: Produced one of the most devastating Derby finishes ever to win the 200th running of the race in 1978, coming from 10 lengths off the leader to forge seven lengths clear with little more than a furlong.

Little Indian lean and fit for long trail

Today's £75,000 Racing Post Trophy brings an opportunity for a cheaply bought colt to prove his worth. As Sean Woods, his trainer, points out to Richard Edmondson, he is the logical pick on form.

There have been some excellent runners from the reservation, such as Dancing Brave and Commanche Run, and Sean Woods hopes he might be saddling another native American to mention in their company when he sends out Little Indian in the Racing Post Trophy at Doncaster this afternoon.

The Newmarket trainer is already well ahead financially on a colt who cost just 21,000gns at Newmarket's October Yearling Sales. "We liked him for his movement and action and type of horse he was," Woods said yesterday. "You'd like to see him muscle up a bit but he's not really that type of horse. He's a very lean individual and if you could compare him to a human being it would be a 5,000m runner rather than a 100m runner bulging with muscles. But his movement has always been superior to anything we've had because he just floats along."

This is not to say that Little Indian conjures up memorable performances every time he is pointed down the gallops. In fact, the opposite is nearer the truth. "He's not a horse at home that makes you think 'wow' when he's working," Woods said. "He's just a very lazy, laid-back horse but he does seem to be able to produce it on the track and it's nice to be involved with him."

The first sign that Little Indian might not be just another face in the herd came in the Vintage Stakes at Goodwood. Central Park won that race but the horse that was travelling fastest at the line was the one that had come down from La Grange Stables. Little Indian subsequently took his bow and quiver to Sandown, where he again finished like the Flying Scotsman, but this time he had no others in front of him.

"People said it was the track and the other horses getting tired but if you watch that race he really quickened up well," Woods said. "He's a Group winner now and it's a natural pro-

gression to come here after the Solario. I've been able to let him down since and bring him back so I've trained him for this race. If you were a form student you would have to go for him because his form stacks up best."

The rivals include Mudeer and Mutamam, both of whom are protecting unbeaten records, plus Kilimanjaro and Craigsteel, who were in the nick of the Royal Lodge Stakes at Ascot. A line on that form, through Mark Johnston's Sharp Play, who was earlier among the stragglers in the Solario, means that Little Indian (next best 3.40) is the best option this afternoon.

Doncaster's first televised race should go to Swiss Law (3.10), who has flourished since being discarded by Godolphin after Royal Ascot. There are fias rising above the waves elsewhere. Luca Cumani now returns Zerpour (4.45) to his

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Shawdon
(Doncaster 4.15)
NB: Little Indian
(Doncaster 3.40)

best distance, while Mark Prescott is represented by Shawdon in the Listed Doncaster Stakes. Sir Mark does not just plonk horses in races such as this as an afterthought. He will have done his homework and ascertained that SHAWDON (nap 4.15) possesses a higher rating than most in this juvenile conditions event.

Today's is one of those beautiful afternoons when the racing runs seamlessly from one channel into another. You don't have to get the lawnmower out of the garden shed or compile a shopping list for the supermarket. Instead just plump up the settee cushions and enjoy.

The warm-up to Doncaster is at Newbury, where the main race is the St Simon Stakes. This Group Three contest looks a better showcase than the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe for Busy Flight (2.30), who was a little embarrassed at Longchamp.

Bristol Channel (1.30), a Generous half-sister to Tenby, merits a little speculation following her satisfactory Leicester debut win, while there are prospects too for Chai-Yo (2.00). Jim Ollis's seven-year-old was sent out for what was ostensibly a tune-up for the jumps campaign at Ascot earlier in the month but ran so well that he now deserves to win a Flat race on his own merit.

BY GREG WOOD

racing manager, served him with notice to quit his beloved West Ilsley the following November. Some people would have decried Carnarvon and, by implication, his employer, to anyone within earshot. Hern, typically, allowed a horse called Nashwan to do the talking for him, with success in that year's 2,000 Guinees, Derby, Eclipse and King George.

"That was a very poignant time to have the horse," Willie Carson, who partnered Nash-

F is for . . .



GREG WOOD
THE A-Z
OF BETTING

Face: There are but two groups of people capable of striking fear into the heart of an on-course bookie – income tax inspectors, and faces. Both are more than capable of rummaging in their satchels and taking a thick bundle of notes home, but the faces are probably the greater evil, since they take the direct approach. A face is any punter who is known to be a winner, often a "commission agent" for a heavy-hitting owner or trainer who would prefer not to rub shoulders with the boi polloi in Tatts in order to get their mon-

ey on. Fortunately for the layers, the faces are few while the mugs are many.

Forecast: An attempt to predict the first two or three finishers in a race, in either the correct or any order, depending on who you bet with. The tote, via the Dual Forecast and Trio, require only the right names, but bookmakers, who offer Computer Straight Forecasts and Tricasts, demand the exact placings too, while also remaining suspiciously coy about the precise formula used to work out the dividend. Sensible punters quite fairly assume that this silence hides a multitude of sins, and either go to the Tote or, better still, avoid

forecasts altogether, particularly the three-horse variety, which will always be vulnerable to the eternal curse of jockeys who do not ride out their mounts for a place. Nor are the layers afraid to tweak the maths when it suits their purposes, most recently – and outrageously – to factor in the effect of the draw at certain tracks where some punters spied the glimmer of an advantage. Their claim that SPs did not reflect the chances of well-drawn horses was an insult to the intelligence of backers, who can appreciate that, for instance, high numbers have a huge advantage in sprints at Hamilton, and adjust their bets accordingly.

Form: What horses have. And, at a midweek meeting at Sandown Park, a fair proportion of the punters too.

Forty-Nines: Low-rent facsimile of Camelot's hi-weekly Lottery draw, which for the last year or so has been taking place every evening in a betting shop near you. Designed to squeeze the last few pennies from the desperados who remain when even the dogs have returned to their kennels, Forty-Nines is the bare bones: no presenters on a few grand per show, nor even a ridiculous fake gypsy who has every angle covered ("I see success for a man in either London or Birmingham. Or possibly a woman."). A disembodied

hand starts up a machine holding 49 balls, of which six emerge from the drum, but because bets are struck at fixed odds, the bookies have thus far escaped being prosecuted for running a lottery, something which legally only Camelot can do. May soon expand to two draws a day because, as one bookmaker put it rather succinctly this week: "If you take £100 on 49s, it is the equivalent of taking £200 or £250 on racing. The high profit margin is worth going for." Enough said.

Franciscal and also for Flockton Grey: both of them horses who were the focus of "ringing" scandals. A ringer is a horse who runs under an assumed

name, often a three-year-old pretending to be a two-year-old, with the intention of defrauding the bookies. Franciscal won a two-year-old seller at Bath in 1953 at 10-1, having been backed off-course to win over £50,000 at SP. Normally, this money would have been "blown back" to the track to shorten up the price, but the four-string gang behind Franciscal (in truth, a three-year-old called Santa Amaro) cut the phone wires to Bath racecourse about 10 minutes before the off, thereby ensuring a healthy SP. The only reward for their ingenuity, however, was jail, and there were criminal convictions too after Flockton Grey's 20-length win, again at 10-1, in a race for two-

year-olds at Leicester in 1982. Flockton Grey was, in fact, Good Hand, a year older than his rivals, and three men were subsequently convicted of conspiracy to defraud, among them a businessman called Ken Richardson. He, somewhat ironically, is now involved with Doncaster Rovers – who have spent the last few months masquerading as a football team.

Furlong: The most elastic unit of measurement known to physical science. Defined as one eighth of a mile, or 220 yards, but its actual length can be anything from 300 yards, if your horse is the one in front, to less than 50, if it's the one finishing fast from off the pace.

CARLISLE

HYPERION

1.50 Sandobar 2.20 He's Got Wings 2.50 Pentlands Flyer 3.20 Four From Home 3.55 Lord Of The West 4.25 Cottage Prince 5.00 Vallhalla

GOING: Firm (Good to Firm in places)
● Right-hand, undulating course. Run-in of 250yds.
● Course is on southern outskirts of town, 4m west of junction 42 of M6. Bus service from Carlisle station 2m. ADMISSION: Club £12 (Pensioners & JRs 50p), 10-15-20 (20-25), CAR PARK: Car & Coach parking free - picnic area & racecourse parking £2-5.
● LEADING TRAINERS: Mrs M Rowley 30-96 (21.7%), G Richards 28-17 (24.8%), C Parker 28-98 (23.7%), J M Jefferson 12-48 (25.9%)
● LEADING JOCKEYS: P Haines 27-88 (27.8%), A Dobbin 22-18 (25.4%), B Storey 25-50 (22%), R Gleave 9-63 (14.3%)
● FAVOURITES: 133-335 (41.5%)
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: None

1.50 GREAT GABLE NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E)

1 3-302 SILVERDALE Lad (28) (2) (B) K Hagg 11 5. M Foster
2 00000 GROS (F12) B Macgregor 6 10 12. S Storey
3 12834 LORD OF THE LOCH (164) L Lingo 6 10 12. J Supple
4 6004 RUN FOR THE MILL (28) (2) J M Johnson 5 10 12. A K Smith (11)
5 00000 SPANISH REPORT (27) D Smith 10 10 12. J Gleave
6 00000 SPIDERS DELIGHT (20) T Cuthbert 9 10 12. J M Johnson
7 2 SANDAR (21) J H Johnson 4 10 11. P Carbery
8 00000 ELISA (147) G Kelly 11 10 7. P Midgley (8)
- 6 declared -
BETTING: 7-4 Sandobar, 8-1 Silverdale Lad, 10-30 Lord Of The Loch, 11-4 Spanish Report, 23-1 Spiders Delight, Run For The Mill, 33-1 Gros, 65-1 Eliza

2.20 SADDLEBACK NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E)

1 53-56 DONT FORGET CURTIS (14) Mrs K Lamb 6 11 5. Miss G Lamb (7)
2 00000 JAMES PROSPER (14) J J O'Neill 5 10 12. J McInnes
3 2 HES GOT WINGS (40) M Pelt 4 10 11. D Bentley
4 00000 RESURFACED (20) J Turner 4 10 11. R Supple
5 5 VINCITROPS (54) Mrs L Russell 4 10 11. A Thornton
6 0 POWDER PRISM (11) Mrs S Smith 6 10 7. A Wilkinson (5)
- 5 declared -
BETTING: 6-4 James Prosper, 8-4 Hes Got Wings, 10-1 Resurfaced, 12-1 Don't Forget Curtis, 25-1 O'Connell

2.50 MALCOLM GALLETLY 80TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000

1 00000 PENTLANDS RIVER (28) (2) J H Johnson 6 11 11. P Carbery
2 00000 ANOTHER MEADOW (19) J Dixon 9 11 5. D Parker
3 00000 BANNER YEAR (133) T Carr 6 11 5. A Dobbin
4 00000 JOURNEY GENERAL (21) C Parker 6 11 5. R Supple
5 14-22 WELL APPOINTED (15) (2) (B) B Macgregor 6 11 5. S Storey
6 500-45 SUPER GUY (14) J Bantley 5 11 3. A Thornton
7 00000 GAME POINT (20) D Lamb 6 11 0. J Berka
- 7 declared -
BETTING: 4-7 Pentlands River, 5-2 Well Appointed, 10-1 Journey General, 14-1 Super Guy, 20-1 Banner Year, 25-1 Another Meadow, 65-1 Game Point

3.20 LADBROKES LUCKY CHOICE H'CAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 added 3m 110yds

1 25-41 GALE AHEAD (28) (2) G M Moore 7 11 10. S Storey
2 00000 KENNA GROOVY (29) Mrs K Lamb 6 11 8. M Smith (8)
3 08-22 FOUR FROM HOME (15) J J O'Neill 5 10 12. A Dobbin
4 456-25 ROYAL CIRCUS (15) P Haines 6 10 12. R Carbery
5 00000 BERBERA (22) J M Johnson 5 10 12. J M Johnson
- 5 declared -
BETTING: 5-4 Gale Ahead, 5-2 Four From Home, 4-1 Royal Circus, 13-2 Berbera, 8-1 Kenna Groovy

3.55 CUMBRIAN HOTEL HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS C) £5,000 added 3m

1 1-341 FIVELEIGH BUILDS (15) (2) Mrs L Russell 10 12 0. A Thornton
2 00000 LORD OF THE WEST (28) (2) J J O'Neill 8 11 1. P Carbery
3 50-42 BOARDING SCHOOL (15) C Parker 10 10 10. D Parker (2)
- 3 declared -
Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights. Boarding School set 8st.
BETTING: 11-4 Lord Of The West, 6-4 Fiveleigh Builds, 3-1 Boarding School

4.25 OLD MAN OF CONISTON HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,650 added 2m 1f

1 134-1 DOWN THE FELL (20) (2) J H Johnson 8 11 10. P Carbery
2 323-1 SUPERTOP (7) (2) L Lingo 9 11 10. W Dowling (7)
3 00000 COTTAGE PRINCE (15) (2) J J O'Neill 4 10 7. D Hogan (2)
4 43-43 HIGHLAND WYAT (7) M Tothman 9 10 10. C McInnes (7)
5 00000 KINGS (22) G M Moore 6 10 10. T Hagg (7)
6 50-35 DARK FOUNTAIN (28) (2) J Dixon 10 10 10. B Storey
- 6 declared -
Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights. Highland Wyat set 11st. Norse set 8st. Dark Fountain set 8st.
BETTING: 7-4 Supertop, 9-4 Cottage Prince, 10-30 Down The Fell, 8-1 Highland Wyat, 15-2 KINGS, 50-1 Dark Fountain

5.00 GREAT DODD STANDARD NH FLAT RACE (CLASS H) £1,500 added 2m 1f

1 51- VALLHALLA (175) M Schuster 4 11 10. C McCannock (7)
2 51- MELBURN (15) J M Johnson 5 11 4. E Callaghan (3)
3 00000 TIZZO N Hagg 5 11 4. D Griffin (3)
4 00000 SLIP AWAY J J O'Neill 4 11 3. R McInnes (5)
5 00000 MILL BEE W Russell 4 10 12. S McInnes (7)
6 00000 SOTATIE Mrs S Smith 4 10 12. R Wilkinson (5)
- 6 declared -
BETTING: 4-11 Vallhalla, 11-4 Melburn, 7-1 Sotatie, 8-1 Slip Away, 12-1 Tizzo, 25-1 Mill Bee

WORCESTER

HYPERION

2.35 Northern Drama 3.05 Brazil Or Bust 3.35 Rowington 4.10 Plan-A 4.40 Northern Starlight 5.10 Cassio's Boy

GOING: Good (Good to Firm in places on hurdles course)
● Left-hand course, level with long straight and easy home.
● Course is on the A443, Station 1m. ADMISSION: Club £12, 10-15-20 (20-25), Silver Ring £50 (CARP half-price). CAR PARK: Free.
● LEADING TRAINERS: M Phipps 35-58 (27.5%), D Nicholson 27-80 (23.9%), K Bailey 26-42 (22.5%), P Hobbs 23-106 (21.3%)
● LEADING JOCKEYS: A Maguire 28-82 (26%), J Bridgwater 26-125 (22.2%), W Williamson 25-100 (17.7%), P Morris 7-65 (12.1%)
● FAVOURITES: 227-681 (25.9%)
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: None

2.35 CITY & COUNTY CONDITIONALS H'CAP HURDLE (CLASS F) £2,575 2m

1 41182 HOMEYED WOOD (28) (2) M Shoppard 9 11 10. L Appleby
2 40004 WHITE WILLOW (18) (2) T Wal 8 11 1. X Alcock
3 40004 ASTRAL INVASION (127) (2) T Wal 8 11 1. J Mayford (8) B
4 00000 NORTHERN DRUMS (28) M Phipps 4 10 10. E Halsehead
5 00000 GALWAY BOSS (28) (2) J Williams 5 10 12. C Supple
6 00000 LANDRA (27) G M Moore 5 10 11. M Bachelard (3)
7 550-20 FASTIME GOLD (159) (2) R J Price 5 10 7. D J Kennerly
- 7 declared -
BETTING: 13-8 Northern Drums, 7-4 Homeyed Wood, 4-1 Galway Boss, 12-4 Fastime Gold, 10-1 Astal Invasion, 20-1 White Willow

3.05 JOHN BURKE MEMORIAL HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 2m

1 17532 BRAZIL OR BUST (27) (2) P R Webster 6 11 10. C O'Dwyer
2 323-1 NO LIGHT (15) (2) A Juntal 10 11 12. L Harvey
3 32551 SIOGA RUN (14) (2) J J O'Neill 8 10 12. A J Prosser (5)
- 4 declared -
BETTING: 11-10 No Light, 6-4 Brazil Or Bust, 4-1 Siga Run

3.35 SUZANNE KIRBY EBF 'NH' NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £2,925 2m 2f

1 423-5 CERTAIN SHOT (22) (2) G McCourt 8 11 0. D Bridgwater
2 00000 LIVES WORK P Hobbs 5 11 0. G Torrey
3 00000 MACHAN BLUE (175) W Jones 5 11 0. T Jenkins
4 P P HANNAHOUNT LEADER (248) D Morris 5 11 0. D Callaghan
5 1 ROWINGTON (28) D Nicholson 6 11 0. A Maguire
6 BRIVE FRIEND C M Hides 5 10 7. V Stacey
- 6 declared -
BETTING: 4-7 Rowington, 7-2 Certain Shot, 11-4 Lives Work, 14-1 Hannahount, 25-1 Brive Friend, 35-1 Hannahount Leader

4.10 PVC CHALLENGE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS C) £5,000 added 2m 4f 110yds

1 140-1 STRONG TARIUM (28) P Hobbs 7 11 10. T Hagg
2 200-5 HIGHLAND JACK (28) (2) A Juntal 7 10 12. C Supple
3 00000 PLAN-A (175) (2) R Price 7 10 7. T Hagg
- 3 declared -
BETTING: 6-4 Strong Tarium, 5-4 Highland Jack, 3-1 Plan-A

4.40 FRED RIMMEL MEMORIAL NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 2m 4f 110yds

1 1F1-21 NORTHERN STARLIGHT (2) (2) M Phipps 8 11 4. C Maude
2 00000 DONLEAVETHYBERRY (24) R Carke 7 10 12. D Morris
3 00000 JALCANITO (21) (2) R Jackson 7 10 12. D Morris
4 200-3 MORTSTOCK (12) R Hagg 7 10 12. S Wynne
5 UNIP. ACT IN TIME (22) R George 7 10 12. T Hagg
- 5 declared -
BETTING: 1-2 Northern Starlight, 5-2 Mortstock, 11-4 Donleavethyberry, 12-1 Act In Time, 16-1 Jalcanito

LADBROKES HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS C) £4,850 added 2m 4f

1 00000 EXPRESS GIFT (113) M Phipps 8 10 10. W Wainman
2 240-2 SOLARIT (254) D Nicholson 4 11 3. A Maguire
3 331-5 SILVER STANDARD (14) (2) T Foster 7 10 12. S Wynne
4 254-1 CASSIO'S BOY (14) (2) J J O'Neill 6 10 12. D McInnes
- 4 declared -
BETTING: 10-11 Solarit, 3-1 Cassio's Boy, 5-2 Express Gift, 6-1 Silver

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A VOICE PERSONALS REPRESENTATIVE,
CALL MONDAY-FRIDAY 9AM-8PM.

WOMEN SEEKING MEN

SUSSEX COAST LADY

Attractive, warm, caring, educated, slim, blonde, mid-40s, many interests, seeks professional male, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

COMPANIONSHIP

Good-humoured, loving, kind, peaceful, slim, blonde, mid-40s, many interests, seeks professional male, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

STYLISH & SPARKLING

Attractive, stylish, brunette, lady, 43, looks younger, no kids, enjoys travel and adventure, seeks professional male, 35-45, NS, with similar interests, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

ADVENTUROUS

Are you an adventurous, affectionate? Well-educated male, 35-45? Are you interested in the great outdoors? Do you want to travel to more exotic places? Female, 35, seeks you, for friendship/romance. 01323 211155

SAILOR AHOY!

Friendly, professional, tall, slim, Asian female, 25, enjoys sailing, table tennis, tennis, badminton, practises martial arts, GSOH, with similar interests, 25-35, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

COOKING FOR ONE?

Me too! Attractive, attractive female, 28, seeks tall, fun-loving male, 28-38, for friendship/romance, possible relationship. 01323 211155

FOXY BRUNETTE

Attractive, very lively, intelligent female, 29, a little eccentric, adores animals, seeks handsome, intelligent, fun-loving male, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

TOTAL WOMAN

Are you tall, handsome, muscular, professional, single male, 35-45? I am a single, black, classy, elegant, educated female, 32, 5'7", 120 lbs, not an idiot. 01323 211155

FAIR-HEARTED

Slender, Anglo-Irish female, 32, living in the Putney area, would enjoy the company of a well-mannered male, of a similar age, for a long-term happy relationship. 01323 211155

TWO'S COMPANY

Are you a, tall, muscular, fun-loving, independent, solvent, NS, 35-45? Then this is for you. 35, 5'7", would like to hear from you. 01323 211155

SEEKING A CHANCE

Chinese female, 33, studying in UK, enjoys music, reading, films and travel, seeks professional, honest, educated male, 30-40, with a dynamic personality, GSOH, for company and fun nights out. Call me now and break the ice. Bristol area. 01323 211155

GORGEOUS CELIBATE

Intelligent, slim female, 33, seeks warm, affectionate, professional male, to share cultural pursuits, country walks, interesting conversation. NW area. 01323 211155

LADY SEEKS

For ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP... or a strong friendship, for possible romance. My interests: music, poetry, writing out, nature, travel, and a good home life. Are you a genuine, kind, loving soul? 26-40? South West area. 01323 211155

CHRISTIAN FEMALE

Professional, Christian female, 30s, enjoys theatre and politics, swimming, seeks Christian male, 30-45, GSOH, NS, for fun and friendship. London area. 01323 211155

GREAT MINDS THINK ALIKE

Outgoing, independent, optimistic female, 35, enjoys live music, travel, witty repartee, seeks male, 40-45, with similar interests, for friendship/romance. NW Manchester. 01323 211155

SOUL MATE REQUIRED

Lovely, slim, attractive, professional lady, occasional smoker, seeking for a long-term relationship, 44-54, Hampshire area. 01323 211155

TRAVELLING GRADUATE

Executive, stylish, slim, attractive, very professional and successful female, 40s, loves music and the arts, seeks male, 40-50, executive/professional, with similar qualities, for friendship, possible relationship. Hyde area. 01323 211155

PEOPLE PERSON

Attractive, slim, 41 female, 45, fun, outgoing, professional, enjoys culture, conversation, laughter, films, walking, most sports, has a son, valued interests, seeks male, 35-50, NS, with similar interests/ambitions. 01323 211155

SIMPLY THE BEST

Creative, humane, black lady, enjoys theatre, laughter, current affairs, cycling, cinema, cooking, seeks fun-loving, bright, creative, black/mixed race male, 35-45, with individuality and warmth. London area. 01323 211155

SEEKING

SOMEONE SPECIAL... Independent, educated lady, enjoys travel, seeks kind, gentle, professional male, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. Surrey area. 01323 211155

VEGETARIAN LADY

Very outgoing female, 40-something, interests include meditation, yoga, classical music, health issues, seeks vegetarian male, 35-45, with similar interests, of similar age. 01323 211155

BIRMINGHAM AREA

Warm, creative, energetic, professional female, 30s, seeks fun-loving, intelligent male, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

GRADUATE WOMAN

...loves the arts, town & country, can cook, loves to travel, seeks fun-loving, intelligent male, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

MUSICAL PARTNER

Creative, musical, warm female, 30s, lives in delightful country cottage, enjoys music, theatre, gardening, seeks intelligent, fun-loving male, 35-45, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

RURAL GLOUCESTER & BOBBLE

Warm, responsive female, 30s, seeks fun-loving, intelligent male, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

EXETER PROFESSIONAL

Dark-haired, slim, articulate, independent, educated female, 35, 5'7", many interests, includes music, 35-45, to meet the stars. 01323 211155

STYLISH LADY

Attractive, successful female, 30s, seeks fun-loving, intelligent male, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

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ALL THE USUAL

Active, bubbly, fit, very enthusiastic, charming lady, 40, seeking male, whatever age, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

Any

...loves the arts, town & country, can cook, loves to travel, seeks fun-loving, intelligent male, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

NORTHERN CELT

Slender, attractive female, 40s, dark hair, pale skin, green eyes, seeks intelligent, good-looking male, to share interests in art, music, travel, walking, drinking, eating. London based. 01323 211155

PEOPLE PERSON

Attractive, slim, 41 female, 45, fun, outgoing, professional, enjoys culture, conversation, laughter, films, walking, most sports, has a son, valued interests, seeks male, 35-50, NS, with similar interests/ambitions. 01323 211155

SIMPLY THE BEST

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THE PHONE CALL THAT

COULD CHANGE YOUR LIFE

hey say it happens when you least expect it. Or should I say where you least expect it. Who'd have thought placing a personal ad would lead to something like this. I was looking to meet a few nice people. But then there was Ben. Wow! Funny, cute, and so sweet. Now we're not talking marriage here. Well, not just yet... 33

To place your own FREE personal ad, call
0800 216 318
EVEN THE CALL IS FREE

For FREE live assistance from a Voice Personals representative call Monday-Friday 9am-8pm.

THE INDEPENDENT Voice personals

Voice Personals appears in The Independent each Saturday and in The Independent on Sunday

ARTISTIC IN

SOUTH DORSETSHIRE... Young, attractive, lively, professional musician, mid-40s, with literary, theatrical, alternative leanings and much more, seeks similar, slim, sensitive male, for whatever the future may hold. 01323 211155

GEORGIC CELIBATE

Intelligent, slim female, 35, seeks warm, communicative, professional male, to share cultural pursuits, country walks, interesting conversation. NW area. 01323 211155

GOOSEBERRY!

Independent intelligent, attractive, witty, thoughtful, sporty, intelligent female, 35, 5'7", seeks similar, intelligent, professional male, 35-45, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

ALTERNATIVE LADY

Kind, intelligent, professional, 30s, seeks fun-loving, intelligent male, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

TOP OF THE RANGE

Warm, engaging, easygoing, successful, Asian female, 30s, seeks fun-loving, intelligent male, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

IN OR OUT OF LONDON

Tall, slim, well-travelled, professional female, 30s, seeks fun-loving, intelligent male, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

LET'S GET TOGETHER

Professionally educated male, 30s, 5'7", seeks fun-loving, intelligent female, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

POETIC WOMAN

Enigmatic, lively female, 31, 5'7", seeks fun-loving, intelligent male, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

YOUNG AT HEART

Male, 31, enjoys music, arts, sports, travel, seeks professional, caring female, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

SEEKING SPECIAL

Attractive, tall, non-British, divorced, beautiful, fit lady, enjoying own successful business and lovely country home, is still searching for you! It's attractive, strong and sensitive male, 42-48, over 6'1". 01323 211155

THE PHONE CALL THAT

COULD CHANGE YOUR LIFE

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THIS GOOD MAN...

...I've had to find, honest, humorous, intelligent, articulate, romantic, reliable, creative, gentle, sensitive, 40, dark, blue, big heart, seeks female, with passion for art, beauty, culture, ideas, laughter, wit, wit, wit. 01323 211155

ASKING THE IMPOSSIBLE

Romantic, humorous, creative male, 53, variety of interests, seeks what seems to be impossible, sophisticated, quality lady, with varied interests, passion and GSOH, to share best of life. Yorkshire area. 01323 211155

MEET ME IN THE GREEN GLEN

Male, 34, seeks attractive female, any age, for friendship, possible relationship. London area. 01323 211155

OH NO! IT'S CURLY WATTS!

Funny, intelligent, different, single, 34, seeks woman, 27-38, for love and big northern vowel exchange. 5 Yorkshire. 01323 211155

CARING AND COMMITTED

Professional male, 30s, 5'10", enjoys cycling, walking, photography, reading, seeks professional, caring female, similar age, for days out/weekends. 01323 211155

DELISSIOUS LADY

I have found what I'm looking for. Tall, slim, affectionate, kind, intelligent, professional, 30s, seeks similar male, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

WELLS AREA

Bright, intelligent, slim, 30s, seeks fun-loving, intelligent male, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

OUTDOOR MALE

Relaxed, easygoing, honest, sporty male, 37, slim build, likes running, countryside, swimming, seeks similar female, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

SEEKING SOUL MATE

Male, 38, seeks female, 30-40, for friendship, possible relationship. 01323 211155

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SEEKING WOMEN

Single male, 35, moderately intelligent, GSOH, enjoys travelling, sailing out, seeks similar lady, for friendship/romance. 01323 211155

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17/PHOTO-SHOOT

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY
25 OCTOBER 1997



Gas Unlimited (above, and bottom photograph) speeds towards the shore after breaking the national liquid propane record at an average speed of 96.34 mph

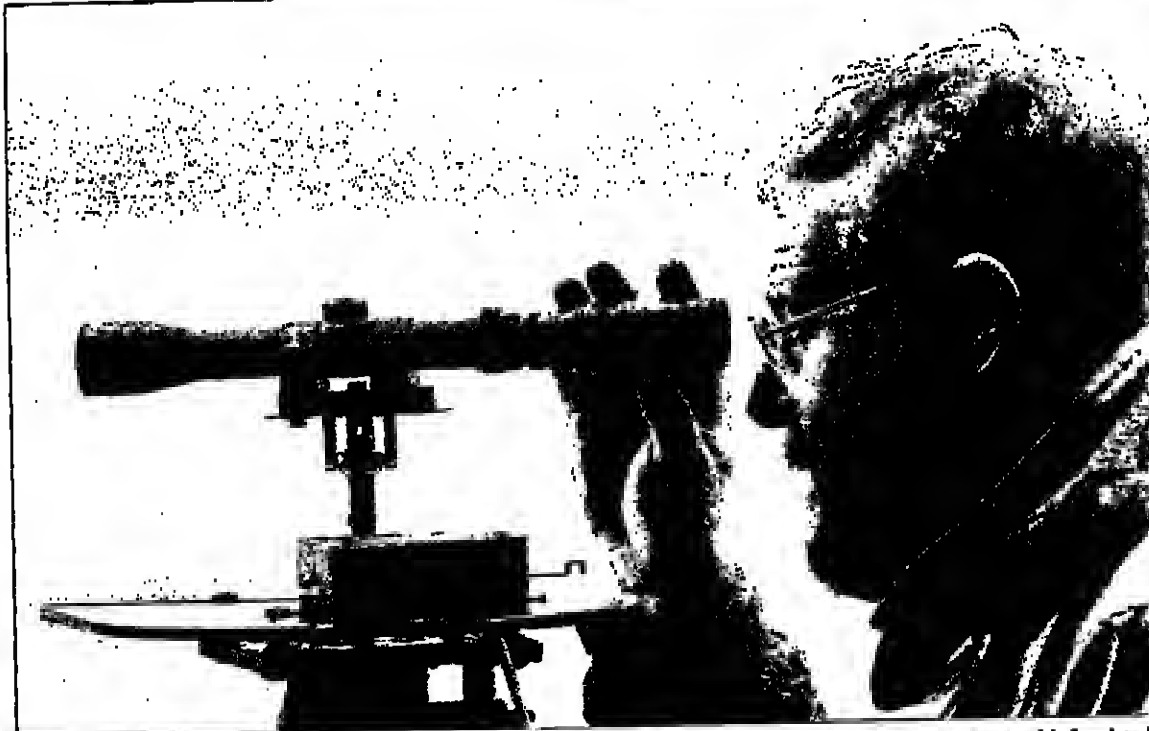
Four world powerboat records and four national records were broken or set during the annual Powerboat Record Attempts Week on Windermere.

The highlight of the week was the achievement of Jim Noone, 39, a Windermere Motor Boat Club member from Leeds, who fulfilled his ambition to become the fastest man on Windermere. He raced over the lake in his hydroplane "Miss Windermere VI" at

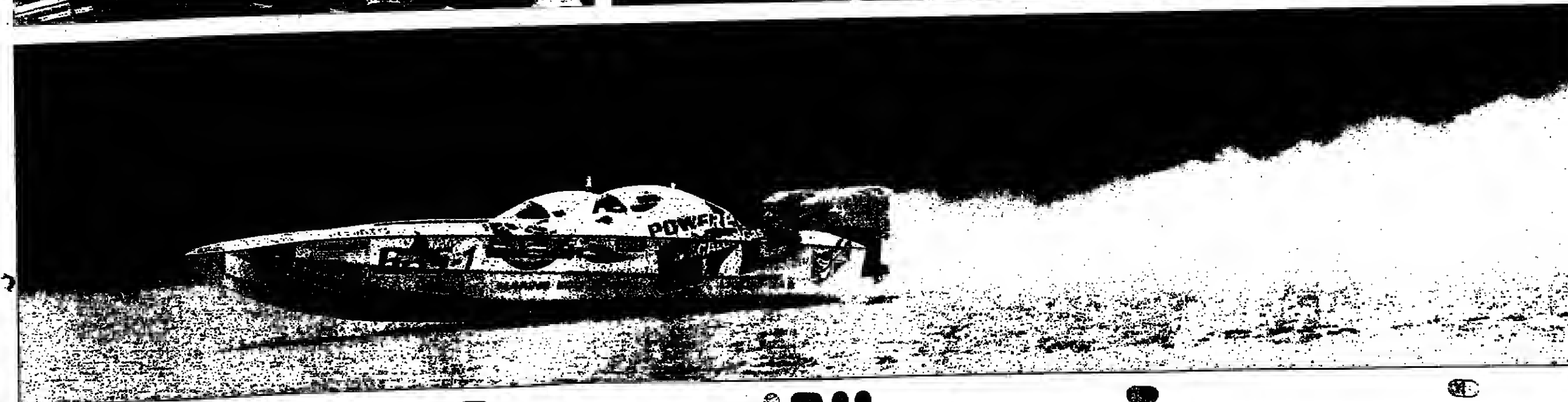
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID ASHDOWN

145.52mph to break the 14-year-old lake record of 144.16mph. In doing so he also broke the world record for Class R racing inboards of over 700cc, which had been set only this summer at 132.76mph.

● Copies of these photographs – and any others by *The Independent's* sports photographers David Ashdown, Peter Jay and Robert Hallam – can be ordered by telephoning 0171-293-2534.



While speed merchants on the lake (top) have eyes on records, the timers, like the one above and left, check them at the flying kilometre, an easier job than being a helper (below) or sorting out engines (below left)



I was obviously keen not to hear the score in advance. And we needed some cat food



MIKE ROWBOTTOM

ON NOT KNOWING THE SCORE

Life, as any major sportsman will tell you - probably more than once - is all about challenges.

(Why does life have to be "all about" in sporting parlance? Why can it never be "partly about", or "sometimes about"? I don't know, but there it is.)

All about challenges. No pain, no gain. If you don't go for it, you'll only be left wondering.

Now you may not describe a five-minute walk up the road on a Saturday night as a challenge, but these things are all about - if I may use that term - the circumstances. And the circumstances of my seemingly straightforward stroll were these.

It was the night of England's decisive World Cup

match in Italy. As a non-subscriber to Sky, I was dependent upon ITV's later screening of the match. I was obviously keen not to hear the score in advance. And we needed some cat food.

Like footballers who suddenly lose all co-ordination when returning the ball for an opponent's free-kick, our two cats become clumsy when hungry. At least, it seems that way.

Wherever you turn, there they are, tripping over your feet. Or swishing things off the table with their tails. Or weaving in front of you as if they were dodging bullets, ears back, inhibiting your every stride with supernatural precision.

At such times - again, like footballers in opponents-have-

a-free-kick mode - they also shout a lot. The brown female one produces a bat-squeak that pierces clean through to the inner ear. In footballing parlance, it is all done with the minimum of backlift - she hardly seems to open her mouth.

The grey, male one creates a wailing sound that forms a crescendo of pain before dying away into a parched cry. Again. And again. And again.

I have worked on strategies to deal with this situation. Repeated use of the phrase "In a minute!", with the variant "I said 'In a minute!'" has sometimes succeeded in checking the row. But not for long.

Fish fingers - it doesn't matter what make - can be effectively deployed as a stop-

gap, even though the noise rises to barely survivable levels as it is being dished out. But this method is ineffective if, as was the case on the Saturday in question, you have no fish fingers.

You can, of course decide simply to ignore all the fuss. Settle down on the sofa, consult the TV schedules if the cat will kindly get off the newspaper - thank you so much - turn up the volume to counteract the yelling of the cat. Cats. Shoo them away. Relax, relax for Christ's sake. Ignore the rustling sound in the next room which possibly isn't the grey one having a revenge piss in the huddle wrap you need to use to send your niece her birthday present. But probably is...

This method has also been demonstrated to be ineffective.

There is only one reliable solution to noisy, bothersome, hungry cats, and that is to feed them double-quick. If you don't go for it, I thought, you'll only be left wondering how long you can stand it.

Thus it was that I put on my coat and set out into a rainy evening fraught with potential danger. Some youths - a newspaper term for young people enjoying themselves - were making their way down the hill on the opposite side of the road, clearly between pubs.

That noisiness. Was it perhaps a good sign? Or had they been drowning their sorrows? Had their last pub had Sky? What if they started chanting the score? Rowdily, but inconclusively, they passed.

I walked on briskly, avoiding looking at the houses on

either side whose lit windows might disclose a domestic tableau of scarf-waving celebrations or abandoned grief.

A car accelerated extravagantly as it turned into the road. Please don't give a victory beep. Thank you. No victory beep.

But they looked like victory beep people.

Was that a bad sign?

I didn't hang around once I got into the shop. Selecting the cuisine of choice, I realised I had the place to myself apart from one woman shopper who was asking the manager's wife about beer.

I paid for the cat food. Cash - no hanging about for the credit card to clear. The manager was a friendly soul, but I could not risk conversation now. "Thanks. Good

night," I said, making space for the woman to put her purchases on the counter.

"Six for five isn't it, those Budweisers?" the manager shouted to his wife. "Aren't they on offer?"

"Yeah," came the reply from the back of the store.

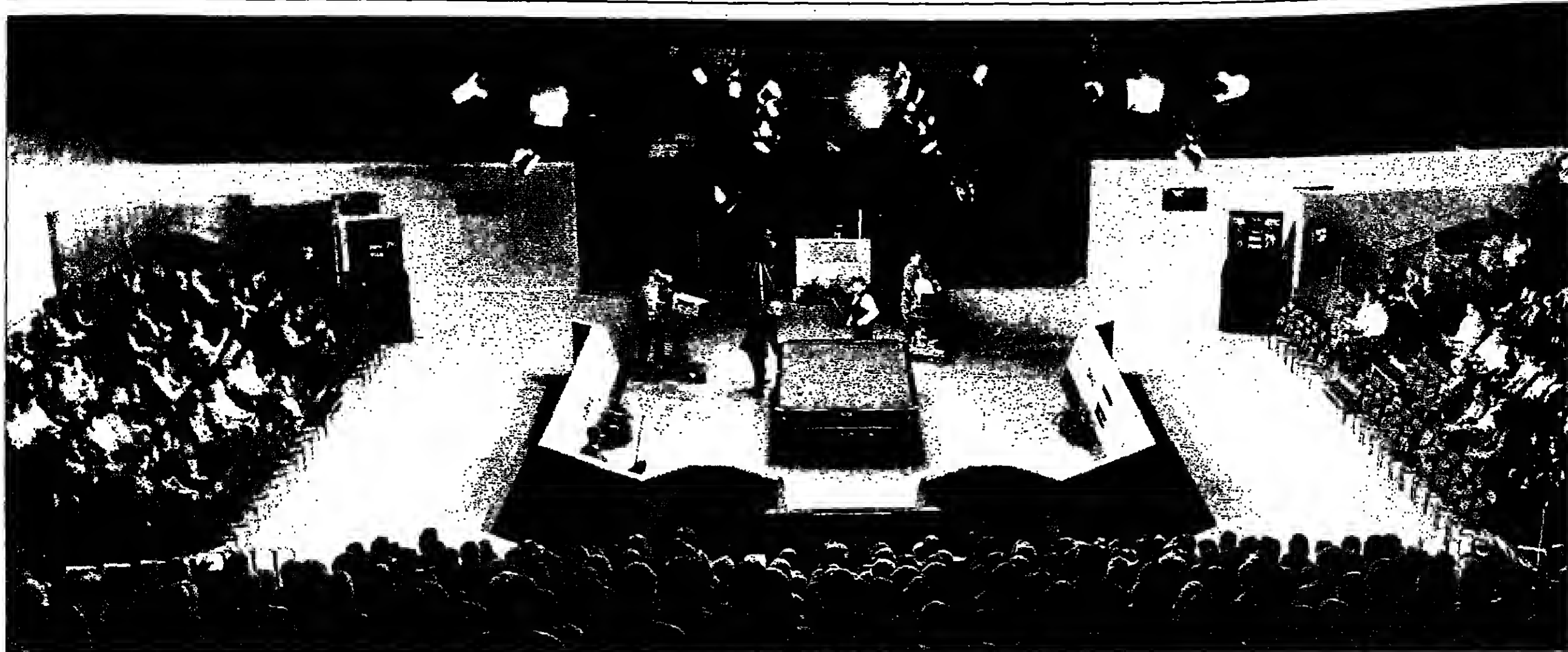
I opened the door, scooting the wet autumn air and the rich, forthcoming possibilities of ITV. Clean away. Scot free. Like that film - what was it? - one of the Hitchcock films, was it?

"I don't suppose you know what happened in the football?" the woman asked.

"Yeah," said the manager. "It was 0-0, wasn't it?"

"Yeah," came the reply from the back of the store.

The shop door swung to behind me.



Head table: Snooker is said to be in decline but there were only a few empty seats at the Bournemouth Grand Prix in the International Centre yesterday

Photograph: David Ashdown

Snooker back in the pink after suffering from success

In the Eighties snooker drew audiences that defied gravity. They are nearer to earth now, but is that a symptom of a terminal illness, or a sport finding a more realistic level? Guy Hodgson attempts to find out.

To paraphrase Charles Dickens, it was the best and worst of times. The day snooker kept up 18.5 million people beyond midnight to watch Dennis Taylor defeat Steve Davis marked an apogee. Great, except that the sport still suffers for it.

"Maybe it was the worst thing that happened to the game," Terry Griffiths, the 1979 world champion, said. "It

created a level that no sport could maintain. Now we get 10m and people say it's a decline. It's oot. That's a massive figure."

Snooker and decline. The words have been in close proximity in print so often you half expected to turn up to the Bournemouth International Centre this week to find the sport wrapped in bandages. It is yesterday's game, you hear. Like bear baiting or real tennis, it was popular once but it has had its day.

Where are the personalities? Where are the sponsors? Why are there empty seats in the auditoriums? Surely a sport must be on its last legs if Jeffrey Archer has had to be taken on board?

Well, no actually. Nobody would expect people whose living depends on it to

pronounce the body dead prematurely, but the strength of their arguments are persuasive. Snooker is not as popular as it was in the mid-Eighties, they agree, but nothing could expect to be. The Davis-Taylor final created a false peak, compare the normal highs of 12m on the finals around 1985 and you get a truer picture.

"We have suffered for our own success," Rex Williams, the chairman of the game's governing body, the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association, said. "Most sports would be overjoyed if they could get the sort of television figures we get. They are tremendous ratings. Someone decided snooker was on the decline and it stuck. It's not true."

Williams was around when snooker was down to four professionals and in serious

jeopardy. Even as recently as 1975, the world championships had to go to Australia in pursuit of a sponsor.

"It's not at the same height as it was 10 years ago," Ray Edmonds, the BBC commentator, said. "But if you compare it to where it was 20 years ago we are talking dizzy heights. All sports have suffered a drop in viewing figures but snooker has held up well."

Transmissions from the Grand Prix at Bournemouth were attracting more than two million viewers last week in the ratings graveyard of mid-afternoon, which may not sound much but it comfortably bettered Test cricket. The final of the Benson and Hedges Masters between Steve Davis and Ronnie O'Sullivan earlier this year had 10 million tuning in, something outdone by the Grand National

and the FA Cup final but by little else.

"I would say, comparatively, that figure is more impressive than the 18.5m of 1985," Bruce Beckett, the media relations manager for the WPBSA, said. "There were only four channels, there was no satellite TV and little or no cable. Now there are so many competing attractions, there's a lot of people looking for a slice of the same pie."

What about sponsors? The tournament at Bournemouth had no backing while the British Open in Plymouth next April will also go ahead without a corporate name in front of its title unless someone can be found in the interim.

Insiders put that down to the squabbling and lack of organisation in the WPBSA. The sport was fine while backers

were queuing up, but once the corporate climate changed and sponsors had to be chased the governing body was not up to it. Golf, which has a much stronger structure, and has a comparable number of events, has also had problems.

"The first thing I did was get rid of the marketing department," Williams, who was elected chairman in April after a 10-year gap, said. "Because I wasn't sure what they did. We need a strong base to attract people into the game. I think the foundations are being built."

As for a perceived lack of personalities, success has had its drawbacks. The teens who have swamped the game were the first generation to see wall-to-wall snooker on TV and the first to have ready access to snooker clubs.

Edmonds says the characters

will come with age. "Steve Davis at 21 didn't have much personality," he said. "Jimmy White would only say yes, no, three bags full at that age. It's unfair to criticise the youngsters now. How many young kids at 18 or 19 have a vivid personality?"

Griffiths concurs. "In 1979 I was the young lad who had come from nowhere," he said. "Young lad? I was 30. Now players reach their peak at 22. Steve Davis and Dennis Taylor can't go on forever, there has to be new faces. Every sport has youngsters coming through but only snooker is condemned for it."

"Take Matthew Stevens - who is in today's semi-final - I've known him since he was eight when his mother asked me to come down to meet him. That boy was in at the start of the boom on TV and since that day

has done nothing but play snooker. At 20 he's played more already than I did throughout my career. To me it's a healthy sign, because the younger the role models are, the more kids will be attracted to the sport."

The future, according to Griffiths, is bright. "Last week they were talking about how interest in athletics has declined. At it's peak, he said, it was getting 10m viewers. It's peak! We're attracting that year in year out."

"The BBC, Sky, you know what they're like. They wouldn't plough money into the game unless they knew they would get the viewers. Snooker's very, very healthy."

To paraphrase another author, reports of its death seem premature.

Bournemouth report and results, page 21

Irwin pumps millions into his pension plan as golf's fabulous fifties cash in

In most sports, turning 50 means the end of the road as a well rewarded competitor, but golf's senior citizens simply switch course to even greater riches.

Tim Glover reports on the golden twilight zone of the silver-haired brigade.

Old golfers never get a bad lie, nor do they lose their balls. They simply carry on swinging, heading not for the sunset but the untold riches at the end of the rainbow.

Last week Hale (and hearty) Irwin won the Kaanapali Classic in Hawaii. It is his ninth victory of the year. The US Seniors tour, equivalent to the record set by Peter Thomson in 1985. The comparisons end there. Thomson would have been lucky to earn \$300,000.

Irwin's prize in Hawaii was \$1,275,000 (\$200,000), taking his total to \$2,131,364 (£1.3m), the most money any player has ever earned on any tour in one year. "Would it be greedy to ask for one more?" Irwin said. The best round, a 66, was scored by Bob Duval. Over in Florida, his son David was winning on the US tour. For-

get the pipe and slippers - there has never been a better pension plan.

The bespectacled Irwin became eligible for senior service when he turned 50 two years ago. It was like presenting him with a gold key to Fort Knox. Prior to this season he had already won nearly \$2m on the golden oldies' circuit and prior to that had won nearly \$6m on the regular tour.

Irwin, of course, is a class act. He won the US Open Championship on three occasions, in 1974, 1979 and 1990. He also won the World Match Play Championship, when it meant something, in 1974 and 1975, and had a tremendous record in the Ryder Cup. In five appearances he was on the winning side five times although he was damned lucky in the cliffhanger at Kiawah Island six years ago.

This was the ballistic war on the shore which went down to the last putt on the last green in the last match, involving Irwin and Bernhard Langer. Despite a badly hooked drive at the last into the crowd, Irwin's ball somehow found its way back on to the fairway. He took five, but Langer missed that infamous five footer that would have won him a point, tied the scores and retained the cup for Europe. Irwin, whose half point secured a US victory by 14 and a half - 13 and a half, was then 46 and he said he was so nervous he could hardly draw breath.

No such problems with the Seniors tour. Many of the events are played not over four rounds but three; often there is no half-way cut and the courses are considerably shorter than those on the regular

tour. The players have time, not only to smell the flowers but to cultivate them. For somebody like Irwin it must seem like a walk on the mild side.

Compared with the mature US Seniors tour, which had the unique pulling power of the likes of Arnold Palmer, Gary Player and Lee Trevino, the European equivalent is in its infancy, but is growing steadily. While Irwin was winning number nine, Tommy Horton was winning his sixth of the season.

This 56-year-old Royal Jersey professional shot 68 in the final round for a three-stroke victory over Jose Maria Canizares in the Senior Tournament of Champions at the Buckinghamshire club near Denham.

It earned him £20,000 for a total of £158,427, not quite in Irwin's super tax league, but a

sum that many on the regular tour would give their milk teeth for. "I don't know where all this is going to end," Horton said. "But I hope I don't wake up."

When John Morgan, a West Kirby based pro, turned 50, he won six events in Europe in 1994 and 12 months ago gained his card for the US, finishing fifth in the seniors' tour school in Florida.

A school for the over fifties? It was not the bed of azaleas Morgan imagined it would be. "I was strong and I thought I had a good chance of winning tournaments," he said. "But I found that if I put in an average performance it got me no higher than the top 50. To make the top 10 I had to play exceptionally well. The depth of ability is tremendous. If you are worse than level par you're

nowhere. Even players like Bruce Crampton and Don January who are over 60, are practising hard and working out. They are still very, very good players."

Morgan, who has won \$300,000 in the US this season, has the support of his wife Christine, who gave up her teaching job to work as his caddy. "She doesn't have to lug my bag around. The caddies can ride in carts while the players walk. Hospitality is first class and all the players get Cadillac with named car spaces."

"But I have to say I prefer Europe where life is a bit more interesting. In the States I sometimes forget which city I'm in. While the manicured courses are lovely to play on, they are too perfect. Golf is not meant to be played on hilliard tables. It's a cross-country



Hale Irwin: golden years

game and we have to accept the rough with the smooth. We play a more natural game in Europe."

Doubtless Irwin would disagree. It would be interesting to match Irwin, the green baize champion, against Horton, the cross-country runner, in a showdown to decide seniority.

Perry destined to follow in famous footsteps

Matt Perry's first-class appearances still number less than 30, yet his progress towards a first England cap appears inexorable.

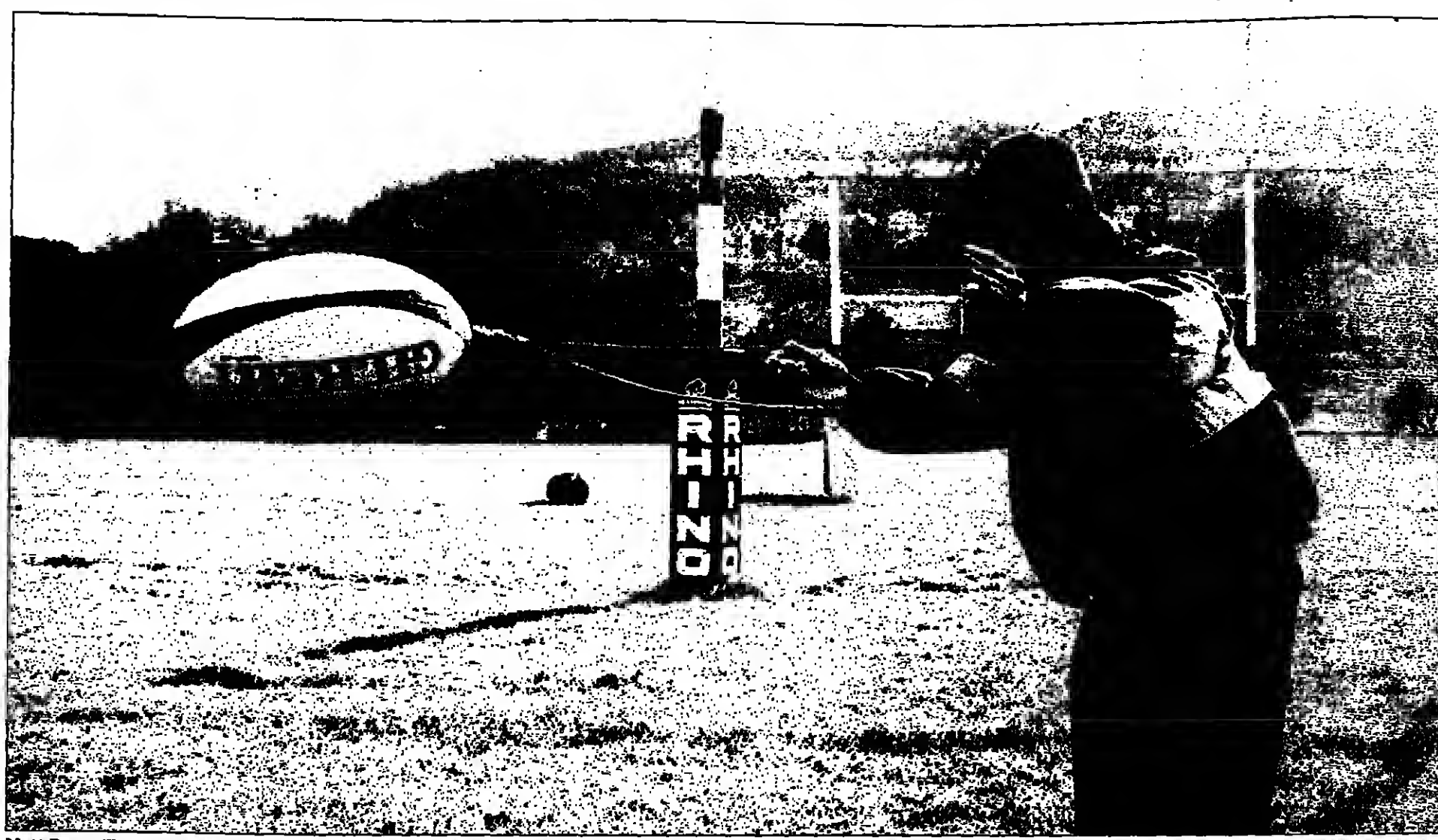
Chris Hewett pins down Bath's elusive midfield prodigy on the subjects that really matter - dressing-room diatribes, training field torments and the fine art of making tea.

The names trip automatically off the tongues of Bath supporters like flies from the Lord's Prayer: Reese, Palmer, Horton, Barnes, Halliday, Guscott, de Glanville, Catt. Only the rarest talents are ordained into the Recreation Ground's mid-field priesthood, and it would be an act of gross heresy to bestow such reverence on a mere 20-year-old fresh out of the professional game's equivalent of Sunday school.

Yet, sacrilegious though it may be to say so, Matthew Breckon Perry is close to securing his place among the Chosen Ones, despite the fact that his top-flight career has been in progress for rather less than half a season. So effortlessly has he coped with the white-hot demands of life in Bath's creative forge that the West Countrymen have felt able to treat Jeremy Guscott's long-term absence as one of life's occasional setbacks rather than a full-blown disaster.

Not that Perry is remotely dismissive of Guscott's sublime talents. "The game is just so easy for Jerry," he says with a slight shake of the head and a mixture of bemusement and bright green envy on his face. "I honestly hope we haven't seen the last of him because you don't come across his sort of quality too often in a lifetime. He possesses pace the rest of us would die for, not just the pace to make the important break, but an amazing extra gear that takes him away from the cover. I loved playing at full-back when he was up there in mid-field, making things happen in front of me and letting me pick my moment to join in the fun. That was dream time."

An engagingly modest sort,



Matt Perry: 'I'm not one for shying away from a challenge, but I must admit to being very quiet indeed when I entered the dressing-room for my first senior game' Photograph: Peter Jay

Perry might have mentioned that as well as playing behind Guscott, he had also played alongside him in the centre, inside him at stand-off and outside him on either wing. He may not be able to boast the great man's super-sleek speed across the ground - who can? - but he leaves him for dead on the versatility front.

Will the youngster admit to a preference for any one of his many positions? "Not really. I played outside-half all the way through school, more or less, and enjoyed it, but then, I've enjoyed my runs at full-back just as thoroughly." Don't tell us. You enjoy playing in the centre, too. "Yes, of course. Very much." Cagey as well as self-deprecating, then. Not even the hint of a clue as to where he sees his long-term future.

Like Guscott, Perry was born in Bath - he is, at present, the only home-town boy in the line-

up - and started out on the rugby road as an eight-year-old with the Recreation Ground minis. His father, Brendan, was himself an exceptional all-round sportsman who played outside-half for the club in the late 1960s, volunteered eagerly for the eternal grind of the old amateur committee room and finally entered high office as president. Needless to say, there was never much possibility of his son breaking with family tradition and lacing up his boots elsewhere.

He was educated at Millfield, alma mater of Gareth Edwards, no less, and an outstanding rugby academy. His cricket was very nearly as good as his rugby and he captained a school team featuring a certain Ben Hollis.

"Ben was such an exceptional player that it was quite a giggle telling him what to do," - but the winter game had the deeper hold on his ambition. After A levels he decided to send his learning curve in a near-perpendicular direction by putting his still under-developed physique on the line in the South African club arena.

"Somehow, I had to finance my trip to Durban and the only job I could find was as a waiter in a typical Bath tea shop. There I was, an England Schools back dropping bone china by the hundredweight. Still, I learned how to make a fine pot of tea. My house-mates, Charlie Harrison and Andy Long, are eternally grateful for the time I spent prancing around in an apron."

There is an element of the shrinking violet about Perry, although he emphasises that his sotto voce politeness takes a distant back seat in the all-consuming passion of a big match. "I'm not one for shying away from a challenge," he says, "but I must admit to being very quiet indeed when I entered the dressing-room for my first senior game."

et indeed when I entered the dressing-room for my first senior game. I remember just sitting there, staring at the floor and not daring to look up, let alone say anything. I don't think anyone has ever taken so long to pull on a pair of socks as I did that day.

"The Bath dressing-room has always had a reputation for being an edgy sort of place, a very cutting environment full of strong characters and strong opinions. I don't think it can be quite as aggressive as it must have been when the Barneses and Chilcots were in there winding everyone up, but there's still a lot of tension, a real atmosphere."

"It's a tough old business in training, too. Andy Robinson is a beast of a coach. There's no other word for him, I'm afraid. But we all know that his intensity comes from the fact that in his ideal world, he'd still be out there mixing it with the opposition. In fact, he reminds us before every match that we're the 15 lucky ones, that there are hundreds of people out there who would give anything to do what we're doing."

"I'm incredibly proud to be playing for Bath and I love the way all the players support each other totally in a match situation. It gives you the confidence to try different things, to play the rugby of your imagination. We had two games towards the end of last season that illustrate the point, a 40-pointer against Leicester and a 70-pointer against Gloucester. We just seemed to click and the feeling was out of this world. Days like that make the all the sweat and effort worthwhile."

There is scarcely an objective rugby analyst around who does not believe he will soon be enjoying worthwhile days on the ultimate stage at Twickenham as well as at the Rec. Drafted into the wider England squad by Clive Woodward, with whom he worked at Bath until the coach's graduation to national colours last month, Perry may well be granted at least one educational meeting with Frank Buncce, Walter Little and the rest of the All Black back division scheduled to arrive in these islands a fortnight on Monday.

"Awesome, aren't they?" he says of the New Zealanders. "I'd love a shot at them in one of the four games, as would any young player with a bit of ambition. It's against teams of their quality that you learn about yourself."

"Having said that, I'm in no hurry. Bath is everything to me at the moment, the most important thing in the world. I know some nice things have been said about me but I don't want to be put on a pedestal. These are still early days. As my father says, a career is a long time."

Greenwood and Phil de Glanville, who need big games, along with Mike Catt and the exciting youngster, Matt Perry. Tomorrow's programme throws up humdingers at Saracens - always assuming you can have a humdinger with 4,000 supporters scattered around a 22,000-seater stadium - and Newcastle. The Londoners, still deprived of the services of the injured Lion Richard Hill in the back row, take on Pete Glanville's buoyant Gloucester and will have to scrummage extremely effectively to neutralise the West Country side's bullish new tight-head, Phil Vickery.

The early passetters from Newcastle will fancy their chances against Richmond, their arch-rivals from last season's Second Division campaign. The visitors have yet to demonstrate any sort of mettle away from home and with their Pumas, Agustín Pichot and Rolando Martin, on Latin Cup duty with Argentina, they may well be travelling too light for comfort.

- Chris Hewett

Team news

Allied Dunbar Premiership

Harlequins v Sale
Harlequins' French international, Thierry Lacroix and Laurent Cabannes, are again ruled out by Latin Cup commitments, although Italy's Massimo Cuttitta is back in club training from the same tournament and could start, injuries are again hindering Sale coach John Mitchell's selection plans, but scrum-half Kevin Ellis is now fit again to challenge Richard Smith and wing David Rees has resumed training following a hernia operation.

Leicester v Bath

The Lions captain, Martin Johnson, leads an unchanged Leicester side from the one beaten 25-0 by Northampton last Saturday, but pressure is mounting on Bob Dwyer's Tigers following an erratic two months. England hooker Mark Regan returns to the Bath line-up after being dropped a fortnight ago. Veterans Jon Callard and Nigel Redman, who missed last Saturday's win over Bristol, also start in an experienced side.

Tomorrow

Bristol v Northampton

Bristol centre Simon Martin is out with a leg injury, so coach Alan Davies has moved Tongan wing Dave Tait into midfield, and called up Stephen Jones, Hooker or Kevin Dunn returns to the fray after missing the Bath defeat because of a mouth infection. Northampton have named a 21-man squad, with coach Ian McGeechan likely to field the side who comfortably accounted for Leicester last Saturday.

London Irish v Wasps

London Irish's Lion, Jeremy Davidson, misses out after injuring his knee against Gloucester last Sunday and now requires keyhole surgery. Follow Irish international Gabriel Rutherford deputises. Guy Gregory and Martin Wood are Wasps' new half-back combination as England pair Andy Gomersall (back) and Alex King (knee) begin their recoveries from surgery.

Newcastle v Richmond

Newcastle again start without Lions Tim Simpson and John Bentley, who missed last week's win at Sale. England full-back Simpson has missed out, but Bentley is among the replacements. Flanker Richard Arnold returns after recovering from hamstring injury. Argentine prop Agustín Pichot and Rolando Martin miss Richmond's trip north because of Latin Cup commitments. Andy Moore continues as scrum-half while Robbie Hinton moves into the back row. Late decisions are planned between full-backs Matt Phil and Simon Mason, and scrum-half Adrian Davies and Earl Vea.

Saracens v Gloucester

Unbeaten Saracens make one change, replacing Irish lock Paddy Johns with Welsh international Tony Copsey. Injured England flanker Richard Hill again misses out. Gloucester's England squad hooker, Phil Greening, is recalled at Neil McCarthy's expense, while French import Raphael Sarradon has been omitted in favour of former Bath wing Mike Lloyd. Saints' forwards include French captain Philippe, is on Latin Cup duty.

Stop-start phoney war halts momentum for Allied campaign

Just when it seemed the Allied Dunbar Premiership had returned to centre stage, England's bemused and befuddled top-flight clubs are preparing to blow it another farewell kiss. This weekend's action will usher in a second early-season hiatus for what is meant to be the jewel in the crown of domestic rugby. With an entire litter of fat cat investors expressing alarm at the costly and continual disruption to their fledgling businesses, this latest interlude is likely to strain their patience to breaking point.

Leicester's confrontation with Bath before a 16,000 Welford Road full-house this afternoon should have been a seminal contest in the chase for the inaugural Allied Dunbar title. In reality, it will shed precious little light on the legitimacy of either side's championship ambitions because the stop-start Premiership is marooned in Never Never Land.

November may be just around the corner but thanks to the craziest fixture list in sport, the Allied Dunbar is still in a

state of phoney war. Constant interruptions have not only denied struggling clubs the opportunity to offer supporters meaningful rugby on a weekly basis, but have also stripped the tournament of its necessary momentum. With European Cup and England international commitments taking precedence again the Premiership is in danger of becoming a phantom competition.

The structured season? What a laugh. There are structures in the Tate Gallery that make more sense than English

rugby's club schedule. Leicester play their third Premiership game of the season today and if they beat Glasgow in next week's Heineken Cup quarter-final play-off, they will not play their fourth until a fortnight before Christmas. That means they must sardine no fewer than 18 games into the second half of the campaign.

As Bob Dwyer, the Leicester coach, found to his cost last season, a spring fixture pile-up is no laughing matter. The Tigers' desire to maintain a title chal-

lenge was badly undermined by a backlog of matches and resulted in senior players carrying injuries into increasingly intense and physical games.

Wasps, the reigning champions who benefited from Leicester's discomfort, are likely to find the boot on the other foot this time. They too have played only a brace of Premiership games and improved performances at Heineken level means they are likely to feel their own fixture squeeze come March and April.

Far from offering incontrovertible proof of championship credentials, this afternoon's encounter in Tiger territory will, ironically, shed far more light on Clive Woodward's first England line-up. Unless Graham Rowntree, the out-of-sorts Leicester loose-head prop, makes a serious mess of Victor Uboqui in the set-pieces, the latter could return to international duty at the expense of the former. What is more, four of the prime candidates to form England's mid-field axis will be on view: Will

Greenwood and Phil de Glanville, who need big games, along with Mike Catt and the exciting youngster, Matt Perry. Tomorrow's programme throws up humdingers at Saracens - always assuming you can have a humdinger with 4,000 supporters scattered around a 22,000-seater stadium - and Newcastle. The Londoners, still deprived of the services of the injured Lion Richard Hill in the back row, take on Pete Glanville's buoyant Gloucester and will have to scrummage extremely effectively to neutralise the West Country side's bullish new tight-head, Phil Vickery.

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- Chris Hewett

SPORT ON THE INTERNET

How to tune in to American college football

Millions of Americans will flock to stadiums all across the nation this afternoon as the college football season enters its second half. The college game is the breeding ground for the National Football League and for those who want to follow tomorrow's superstars today, the next best thing to having a seat on the 40-yard line is having an Internet connection.

The Sports Network offers daily college football news reports as well as schedules, standings and a live scoreboard updated continuously while games are in progress. It also features a chat room where rival supporters can engage in virtual slanging matches.

Every week sportswriters and editors vote for the best teams in the nation and the results of the Associated Press Top 25 are posted on the Web. The Nebraska Cornhuskers, undefeated in six games this season, are top of the AP poll as they head south to take on Big 12 Conference rivals Kansas this evening.

Sportswriters being a notoriously fickle lot, the AP poll is, to say the least, a highly suspect method of determining the national champion. But CNN and Sports Illustrated magazine have given the fans a chance to have their say on their college football Web pages. In addition to providing comprehensive news, scores, game summaries and mountains of statistics, the site offers fans the chance to vote for the CNN/ISI Top 25.

Anyone with at least a 14,400 modem and the right

software can actually tune in to live radio broadcasts of dozens of games. In order to do so you will need to download RealPlayer software, available free from the Real Audio site. Then go to Audionet, where you can find links to live radio broadcasts of more than 50 different games each weekend. Best of the lot today is likely to be the clash between the University of Michigan Wolverines and their interstate rivals, the Michigan State Spartans, kick-off at 6.30pm UK time.

One of the most popular college football teams in America is Notre Dame. The ND Football site is a good place to keep up with the latest developments in the quarter-back controversy currently raging in South Bend, Indiana. With a dismal record of two wins and five losses so far this season, it appears that not even the Pope's prayers will be enough to secure Notre Dame a berth in a bowl game next New Year's Day.

- Roger Ridley

'A lamp-post could never have took what he took'

Up here in the Highlands, where I have been for the past fortnight there are few programmes you are less likely to see elsewhere, including on Grampian last weekend, that would go down well in any of the ITV regions despite the English subtitles (which some people seem to dislike). *Dùn cheilidh* ("Celtic firs") traces the history of boxing in Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and a fine series it is too, with a real poetry to the Gaelic commentary. And most of the interviews are in English so Sassanachs like me don't feel too adrift.

The programme I saw was largely devoted to two boxers whose names will always live in my head in the voice of Harry Carpenter: Walter McGowan and Howard Winstone. McGowan was trained by his father, who, in his own boxing days, with a big family to support, once fought 29 times in three weeks. McGowan emerges as a crisp storyteller, describing his first encounter with the Italian Salvatore Burrini, for the European flyweight title, he said, "He was like a tank, he absorbed everything I threw at him. A

lamp-post could never have took what he took."

The Glaswegian lost that fight, but had his revenge in 1966 beating Burrini in London for the world title. "Wee Salvatore came over at the end of the fight. 'Oh you are too fast for me, my friend, too fast.' And I said 'Thank Christ for that.' McGowan was injured running backwards up a hill during roadwork. "I felt this pang in my heel - my Achilles tendon puffed up. Doctor, hospital, operation. Bang. Later on, half-way through a fight, it burst again. A painful thing, too, so it is. I'd get all my teeth pulled out anytime, before I'd get a job like that done again. And as life went on, I began to get a bit slower, and there were guys beginning to catch me with straight lefts. So I just said ta-ta, while I could still write my name and address. Good-bye."

Winstone was born in Merthyr Tydfil, and *The Independent's* Ken Jones is enlisted to explain the unique character of the place - an "ethnic confusion" of English, rural Welsh, Georgians, Irish and Italians who came to the pits and the



CHRIS MAUME
SPORT ON TV

steelworks. "It's a strange place, Jones said. "Even Welsh people find Merthyr strange." It was a proud boxing town he recounts. "There was a legend that boys were born with their fists clenched."

Three times Winstone tried to wrest the world featherweight crown from the Mexican Vicente Saldivar, the third time in the Aztec stadium. "The heat and beauty of Mexico amazed Winstone who had been born and raised in the industrial heartland of Wales, where coal brought both wealth and sadness

to people's lives," said the Gaelic voiceover. The altitude took its toll on Winstone: "The first couple of rounds I was doing all right. By the eighth I could not move my legs." To the 12th he was put down for a count of nine. "I got up and he started throwing everything at me." His trainer Eddie Thomas, threw in the towel, "I kicked the towel out, but the referee had stopped the fight. Saldivar retired that night and in 1968 Winstone took the title, beating Mitsunori Seki at the Albert Hall, inciting riotous celebrations from the largely Welsh crowd. He was the first Welsh world champion for 45 years.

I was intending only to write about programmes shown only north of the border this week, and had Celtic and Rangers not maintained the proud Scots tradition - interrupted only a few times over the years - of being rubbish in Europe, I could have watched an Old Firm Uefa Cup tie. Instead, though, there was the unmitigated pleasure for a Manchester United fan of seeing Liverpool being thrashed by Strasbourg. Now I

usually want other English clubs to do well in Europe, if only because it makes things more interesting. But not Liverpool.

As a son of a Mancunian Catholic with a footballing raconteur for a grandmother ("Go on, Nan, tell me about the Munich disaster again") who believed that Matt Busby was the Pope's right-hand man, I was only ever going to support one team. I could also plead special circumstances in that I went to school in Liverpool, and being one United fan amongst thousands of Scousers has given my dislike of the Anfield mob a particularly vituperative intensity.

So by the time the third goal went in on Tuesday, I was virtually incoherent with glee. Call me small minded, I don't care. "You can't defend like that in Europe, it's driving me round the bend" said Roy Evans, who looks like a broken man (even I felt for him a little bit). God Bless Graeme Souness, that's what I say. Personally, I think he was on the take from Old Trafford, bribed to destroy an entire empire from within. Give the man a sainthood.

Win or lose, Schumacher remains a champion apart

Michael Schumacher must finish ahead of Jacques Villeneuve tomorrow to clinch his third Formula One world championship. Even if he fails, though, there is no doubting who is best.

The raw speed, of course, is a key part of the equation. "It's easy to see," says the former Formula One driver turned ITV commentator, Martin Brundle, who was Michael Schumacher's team-mate at Benetton in 1992. "First of all Michael is fast. Very, very fast."

So fast that when he first drove an F1 car, the Jordan operations director, Trevor Foster, remembers trying to slow him down, "until we realised that this was his natural pace and that he was completely unfazed by it all. Then we let him have his head. That day we knew he was something very special."

All of the past greats - such as Fangio, Moss, Clark, Stewart, Lauda, Prost and Senna - demonstrated similar inherent pace. But, in common with such luminaries, the secrets of Schumacher's devastating dominance of F1 go much deeper.

"Like Senna and Prost and Lauda he's very, very intelligent," Brundle continues. "He's got a bit of grey matter. Thirdly, he is supremely fit and agile. Fourthly, pressure is just water off a duck's back for him. The closest I think I've ever seen him to losing control, inside a car, is the recent Luxembourg GP at Nürburgring, going down to the first corner, when his brother overtook him and crashed across the race track. He went round the outside and got taken out. In the car it's not like him to do all that Jean Alesi stuff across the race track. It really struck me. He's usually in total control."

"The fifth point comes down to his intelligence. He's able to see the big picture and to get the team all working for him. Every mechanic, engineer, fabricator or whatever in the team can love you to pieces as a person, but whilst it's pleasant it's completely meaningless. But getting them all respecting you and rowing in the same direction for you, that's what he is really good at."

Brundle likens Schumacher's speed to Ayrton Senna's, but believes that their make-up differs significantly. "I don't think he's naturally gifted, like Senna. Senna was gifted, absolutely on a different plane. There was something more to him than just being a great racing driver. He was on a genius level. Michael is a great racing driver, but I think he's mentally much more together than Senna, particularly emotionally. I think he applies the skills he's got in a more controlled way than Senna did. But I'm not sure he's got the absolute born gift that Ayrton had. And I don't think Michael would disagree with

that. But, as a package, he may well turn out to be better. I think in some ways he's more rounded and complete."

Schumacher's speed, car control and basic racing intelligence have won him countless races, investing him with the ability to adapt to revised strategies even while racing, and to minimise the time decelerating during pit stops, and accelerating back to speed. When rivals make their stops, he is the master at the fast lap which closes the gap and allows him to beat them back on to the track after his own stop. "It's the brain department again," Brundle says.

Then there is the selfish streak that all modern-day winners need, and Damon Hill well remembers the altercation in Adelaide that cost him the chance of the world championship that year, as Schumacher deliberately closed the door until they collided. "Some of the things that Michael pulled in 1995, particularly at Spa, were difficult to take, which was why at the time I sought a clarification from the FIA [the sport's governing body] on what tactics were deemed acceptable and what weren't," Hill said.

PROFILE BY DAVID TREMAYNE

Johnny Herbert, too, suffered as Schumacher's team-mate in 1995. "I was four thousandths of a second slower than him in first practice in Argentina, and from then on he suddenly started suggesting that perhaps we shouldn't share our car set-up information, and that since we both had things we might want to keep to ourselves, we should stop collaborating." From that moment Herbert no longer became privy to differences in their cars, and found Schumacher demanding more and more of his allocated testing time, when drivers really get to understand and develop their machinery. There was nothing malicious in it: Schumacher was simply protecting his territory and using his clout to maintain a dominant position.

Brundle provides a counterpoint, however. "In 1992 Michael was a bit naughty and used to block me a lot when we were racing together. But two years ago, funnily enough, he apologised for that. We were having dinner one night and he said: 'I can't believe I was so stupid to block you.' More often than not I was quicker than him in a race though he'd out-qualified me, so I had to pass him. And he ran me off the road in Hungary. I hit the back of him, and then his rear wing fell off. I have to say I laughed for two laps. People say he's arrogant but not many drivers will say that to you. It showed he'd

been thinking about it. He's funny like that."

He remembers the "green" young man that Schumacher was in their days as team-mates, when he thought England was grey and dull. "Later he said to me: 'I was wrong. England is beautiful, isn't it?'"

The 1997 Schumacher is a more worldly, rounded figure. He admits that the birth of his first child, Gina-Maria, has changed of his outlook on life, and says: "Becoming a father has had an effect on me. Before, F1 was the whole focus of my attention, but now it is family first and then motor racing."

"Becoming a father has not suddenly made me more aware of the dangers of motor racing or made me wonder how long I should continue. Two years ago, I said I would retire in five years but now I'm not so sure. It will depend when the day comes that I don't want to test and race any more. When you don't like to do something, that is the time to stop."

He is one of the highest paid sportsmen in history, but says that money is of secondary importance. To any successful athlete, it is usually only a measure of their value. "It gives me satisfaction knowing I do not have to worry financially about the future," he agrees.

"But to me, motor racing has always been more than just a financial thing. People get the wrong impression. Sometimes the media build up people like myself as oot hman. But, of course, I am. When I am racing, I am focused on what I am doing. Maybe I am a bit more precise and professional than others. But that is my way. What I try to do is commit myself totally as a racing driver and then to switch off completely."

The problem for his rivals is that when that focus is on racing, nobody does it better, and the balance that has come into his life has only made him stronger. Nigel Stepney, the chief mechanic at Ferrari, worked with and greatly admired Senna. "Michael is cool," he stressed. "He is very calm in situations where calm is needed. Rather than getting all excited and disturbed he thinks a lot more and takes it easy in those situations. And in a race, the driving comes naturally. The rest of the time he's like the Sennas and the Prosts, he's got more time to think about strategy."

Stepney cannot remember a time since Schumacher began at Ferrari that he has lost his cool publicly. "He doesn't get over-excited at all. If he does, it's behind closed doors, just with the top management. He never loses it in front of the engineers or mechanics. In Japan he was very calm. He didn't use all the laps he was allowed. He knew the car was good and he was under control and didn't have to do any more than necessary. It's been a long time since we've seen him like that, and when he is like that he is at his most dangerous."

In Spain this weekend he looks just the same way.

There is a ruthless streak in Michael Schumacher that many of his rivals - and even some of his team-mates - have encountered and which once led Damon Hill to seek clarification from the sport's governing body to discover just what were acceptable racing tactics and what were not. But, above all, he is a masterful driver and a supreme tactician, as his leading rival, Jacques Villeneuve (right), has discovered to his cost this season.

Photographs: Robert Hallam (main picture) and Empics



For Dickson James

The road to Jerez: how Schumacher and Villeneuve have chased the world championship

AUSTRALIA - 10 March
Schumacher: Q3 P2 - 6pts
Villeneuve: Q1 Ret lap 0 - 0pts
The pre-season favourite, Villeneuve got off to a poor start when, at the first corner, Eddie Irvine hit the Canadian's Williams-Renault, forcing him into the gravel and out of the race. Schumacher, meanwhile, took six points with his second place behind David Coulthard.

ARGENTINA - 13 April
Schumacher: Q4 Ret lap 0 - 0pts
Villeneuve: Q1 P1 - 10pts: 20
Barrichello again turned provider for Villeneuve. Turning into the first corner, Schumacher piloted his Ferrari into the back of the Brazilian's Stewart-Ford. Villeneuve shook off a stomach upset and the attentions of Irvine to secure another 10 points.

MONACO - 11 May
Schumacher: Q2 P1 - 10pts: 24
Villeneuve: Q3 Ret lap 16 - 0pts: 20
Schumacher confirmed his status as the world's best driver in the wet, lapping the hapless Villeneuve who started on slicks and ended up in a barrier, and finishing 53sec ahead of Barrichello, who gave Jackie Stewart's team its first points.

CANADA - 15 June
Schumacher: Q1 P1 - 10pts: 37
Villeneuve: Q2 Ret lap 2 - 0pts: 30
After a week in which he was reprimanded for comments deemed detrimental to the sport, in front of his home crowd Villeneuve made an elementary error and spun his Williams into the barriers, leaving Schumacher to sweep to victory.

GREAT BRITAIN - 13 July
Schumacher: Q4 P2 - 6pts: 47
Villeneuve: Q1 P1 - 10pts: 43
Fortune smiled on Villeneuve at Silverstone. A 33-second pit stop helped to have ended the Canadian's hopes until Schumacher retired with a wheel-bearing problem. When Mika Hakkinen's McLaren expired six laps out, Villeneuve cruised home.

HUNGARY - 10 August
Schumacher: Q1 P4 - 3pts: 56
Villeneuve: Q2 P1 - 10pts: 53
Damon Hill looked set for victory until his Arrows gradually gave up the ghost. Villeneuve reeling in his 34-second advantage to push the Briton into second. Fourth place assured Schumacher maintained his lead, albeit a slim three-point one.

ITALY - 7 September
Schumacher: Q3 P6 - 1pt: 67
Villeneuve: Q4 P5 - 2pts: 57
The championship issue was reduced a sideshow at Monza. Villeneuve finished fifth, edging a point closer to the sixth-placed Schumacher, whose Ferrari, much to the dismay of the 115,000 crowd, was woefully outclassed.

LUXEMBOURG - 28 September
Schumacher: Q5 Ret lap 2 - 0pts: 68
Villeneuve: Q2 P1 - 10pts: 77
Ralf Schumacher's dive into the first corner resulted in him driving over his older brother's Ferrari. Schumacher senior limped on, but his suspension was too badly broken to continue. The Canadian coasted home to move into a nine-point lead.



BRAZIL - 30 March
Schumacher: Q2 P6 - 2pts: Total 8
Villeneuve: Q1 P1 - 10pts: Total 10
It was second time lucky for Villeneuve. The Canadian got a poor start, but as Rubens Barrichello was left stranded on the grid, the race had to be restarted. Schumacher took an early lead, but was soon passed by Villeneuve's Williams-Renault, a lead he was never to relinquish.

SAN MARINO - 27 April
Schumacher: Q3 P2 - 6pts: 14
Villeneuve: Q1 Ret lap 40 - 0pts: 20
A race notable for the maiden F1 success of Heinz-Harald Frentzen. After Villeneuve's race ended with a gear selection problem, Schumacher and his compatriot provided an impressive battle to give Germany its first one-two finish in a grand prix, just 1.237sec apart.

SPAIN - 25 May
Schumacher: Q1 P4 - 3pts: 27
Villeneuve: Q1 P1 - 10pts: 30
The Canadian returned to the top of the drivers' championship with victory in the most dull race of the season. Villeneuve held the advantage of pole going into the first corner, where he was briefly hounded by Schumacher, but then pulled away to head the procession.

FRANCE - 29 June
Schumacher: Q1 P1 - 10pts: 47
Villeneuve: Q4 P4 - 3pts: 33
Schumacher's third victory in four races put him 14 points clear of Villeneuve. The German's calculated risk of staying on slick tyres despite rain late in the race paid off as Villeneuve, again struggling with this set-up of his Williams, could only finish fourth.

GERMANY - 27 July
Schumacher: Q4 P2 - 6pts: 53
Villeneuve: Q3 Ret lap 33 - 0pts: 43
The pendulum again swung the German's way at Hockenheim. Schumacher finishing a contented second behind Gerhard Berger, despite tyre and gear problems. Villeneuve was never in contention, spinning out after 33 laps when running fifth.

BELGIUM - 24 August
Schumacher: Q2 P1 - 10pts: 66
Villeneuve: Q1 P5 - 2pts: 55
Schumacher again proved he was not only the master of Spa, but also of the weather. Despite the torrential rain, he opted for wet-dry settings and intermediate tyres. Just before the start, the sun came out and the Williams, on full wet settings, were left foundering.

AUSTRIA - 21 September
Schumacher: Q3 P6 - 1pt: 68
Villeneuve: Q1 P1 - 10pts: 67
Schumacher ran foul of the stewards, receiving a 10-second penalty for overtaking under yellow flags, and re-emerged in ninth place, but managed to haul himself into sixth. Villeneuve, squandered his pole, but worked his way into a comfortable victory from third place.

JAPAN - 12 October
Schumacher: Q2 P1 - 10pts: 76
Villeneuve: Q1 P5 (disq) - 0pts: 77
The penultimate race of the season and the most contentious. Villeneuve raced under appeal, but his two points were deducted after Williams decided to drop their appeal, leaving the victorious Schumacher leading the standings by one point.

A win bonus is no more of an incentive than a packet of Smarties



THE GAFFER TAPES

It'll be a relief to get back to playing football at the Old Cornfield today as we've had a nightmare week. It all started when we discovered we'd booked Chris Eubank to open the new club megastore on the same day Naseem Hamed was opening the new burger bar next door.

It was terrible, no sooner had they caught sight of each other than there were Cornburgers and branded leisure wear everywhere. Eubank got so upset when his monocle was thrown in the deep fat fryer he tied Naz to a lamp-post with half-a-dozen suspender belts from the new line of tasteful club lingerie. Fortunately Cliff Phace, our centre-half, was around to calm it down. Once Chris and Naz get out of hospital we'll probably all have a good laugh about it.

Not that anyone is in the mood for a giggle at the Old Cornfield. We've had a major internal inquiry this week after a cache of food and drink was found in a coolbox behind a dressing-room locker. We've got a very careful diet at this club and players are under strict orders about what to eat and when to eat it.

The finger of suspicion is on the Italians. They've been unhappy with the regime since they got here and you must admit the stash - pasta, beans, fresh fruit and veg, extra virgin olive oil and bottled water - does suggest they could be guilty.

Personally, I'm disappointed. If they come over here they should adapt to our ways: bacon huddies and a cup of tea before training, a break for Hob-Nobs and coffee at 11, steak and Yorkshire pud for lunch washed

down with a pint of lager top. If it was good enough for Skinner Normanton it should be good enough for Dolce Vita and Cusi Fan Tutti. Fortunately they're only here on loan. Once they've paid off the money they lost on bets on the England game they can go back.

The cash will come in handy as the chairman's credit card bill has come in. As I mentioned a few weeks ago I accidentally ran up half a million lire on it at the Hot Hands Massage Club in Rome. It's a bit of a problem as the only way Sir Hiram could convince his wife that it wasn't him was by blaming me. This is fair enough in one way but it could leave to major difficulties for me especially as Sir Hiram also told her I was responsible for a £250 bill from the Black Lace Bar at Kings Cross.

At least we picked up three points last week. It's really hard motivating the players these days, they all earn so much money a win bonus is no more of an incentive than a packet of Smarties. You've got to be a bit cleverer than that so at half-time, with us 2-0 down, I told them I'd spiked one of the Gatorade bottles with laxative and it would be handed, without his knowledge, to the worst player in the side.

We went through them like a dose of salts in the second half winning 5-2. The only problem was I missed the last two goals as I had to go to the dressing-room sharpish. With the heat last Saturday I got thirsty doing all that celebrating and... yes, you've guessed it and it's not funny.

Meanwhile, the attempt to sign Paul Gascoigne has hit a

snag. He insists the dentist's chair being installed for him in the Mop & Bucket is in the lounge bar, not the tap room. "We'll have mon," he told Sir Hiram. "I'm a changed man, I dima go in tap rooms anymore. Me, I'm mature me, I'm a lounge bar drinker." The landlord, however, has refused. He says a dentist's chair would lower the tone of the lounge bar and, besides, it would get in the way of the stripper.

A few injury worries for today's game. Cliff Phace has a broken hand, Shaun Phone has food poisoning which is a bit worrying as his wife runs the burger bar, while Ivor Niggie has strained a muscle watching television - apparently it was that programme about Sunday Sport. And I've got dysentery. Barry Gaffer was talking to Glenn Moore

SIDELINES

Barnsley's links with Old Trafford



Barnsley supporters at Old Trafford today may take a greater interest than most away fans in the memorial clock which freezes the time and date of the Munich air crash in 1958. For among the Manchester United legends who died were two from the South Yorkshire coal capital, Tommy Taylor and Mark Jones. Taylor, from the tough suburb of Smithies, went from being the Barnsley apprentice who took home £2/8s/1d in his first wage packet to England's centre-forward after a £29,999 transfer to United (Matt Busby did not want him burdened by a £30,000 price tag). Jones, a centre-half from Ardsley, was snapped up by United from school.

United's first championship side, in 1909, contained two ex-Barnsley men, George Wall and George Stacey, who later worked in the pit and docks respectively. A prolific scorer between the wars, Ernest Hine, started and finished at Old Trafford after representing United and England.

Alex Ferguson's first major signing, Viv Anderson, became Barnsley's player-manager, with Denis Graham and Andy Rammell also arriving from United. Graham was one of Fergie's fledglings and there might have been a third Busby Babe from Barnsley. Local prodigy Colin Brookes was United's youngest reserve player at 15, months before Munich. Homesick, he soon returned to become Barnsley's youngest too.

Welcome to America: soccer's land of statistics

Sport in the United States tends to come down to simple arithmetic in the end but, asks John Corin, does it really add up?

There is one thing, and perhaps one thing only, that the United States can teach the rest of the world about soccer. Statistics.

In Britain, in Italy, in Sierra Leone soccer fans will endlessly debate the merits of player X versus player Y. Because in such debates the arguments are always subjective the outcome is necessarily inconclusive.

Not so in the US where each player's performance is evaluated scientifically on the basis of painstakingly assembled numerical data.

Take the statistics for tomorrow's Major League Soccer (MLS) Cup Final, the game which will decide the 1997 championship. The teams are DC United, the defending champions, and Colorado Rapids, who last season ended up bottom of the 10-team professional US league.

United's striker is Bolivia's Jaime Moreno. The Rapids' striker is the home-grown Chris Henderson. Which is the better player? Easy. It's Moreno.

According to figures supplied by the MLS, in 1,725 minutes of play over 20 games this season, Moreno has scored 16 goals (five of them winning goals), delivered eight assists and had a total of 66 shots, 48 of them on target. Henderson, by contrast, has played 2,501 minutes over 30 games, scored seven goals with 14 assists (two of them winning assists) and of the 63 shots he has attempted 26 were on target.

If you had the time and inclination to study all of the above figures and work out a couple of averages you could probably declare - with a certain precision - that Moreno was three times better than Henderson.

As for the goalkeepers in the big game, one published analysis gives the advantage to the Rapids, whose first-choice keeper has saved 111 out of 144 shots in 25 appearances, conceding an average of 1.54 goals per game; compared with the United keeper's 57 saves from 82 shots in 14 games, letting in an average of 1.69 goals per game.

Admirable as American soccer's fixation with numerical minutiae undoubtedly is, eagerly as the example may be followed by obsessives elsewhere, including Britain where statistics are much more readily available

than they once were, it is possible that here we have part of the explanation why in the land of the free the game has not really caught on yet as a spectator sport.

All this number-crunching misses the point about soccer, it is a game where the inscrutable human factor is paramount, where the disciplines of science are of limited diagnostic value. American football, by contrast, lends itself much more to logical analysis. The players are more like gigantic chess pieces than individuals blessed with free will. The coaches and their numerous assistant technicians are the ones that move the pieces, their decisions determined by intricate geometrical and mathematical calculations.

Perhaps it is soccer's relative randomness that moved a sports writer on the *Kansas City Star* to observe last week that "the biggest trick in Kansas City - as in other parts of the country - is convincing people that soccer is more than a kid's game".

As the MLS concludes its second season tomorrow, the great unanswered question remains whether the gap between children's soccer and professional soccer will ever be bridged. No sport is more popular among American under-15s yet average attendances at MLS games dropped from



Right first time: DC United's John Harkes hoists the trophy aloft after his side won the inaugural Major League Soccer championship last year. Photograph: Rick Stewart/Allsport

17,416 in 1996 to 14,616 this year, sadly below the 20,000 MLS officials had predicted at the start of the season.

There are rays of hope on the horizon, however. ABC television will increase its coverage from one game to 12 next year. Nike is pouring \$120m (about £75m) into an MLS youth de-

velopment scheme. All 56,000 tickets for tomorrow's final at Washington's RFK Stadium are sold out. Whether many of the spectators will understand what is going on remains to be seen. John Harkes, the former Sheffield Wednesday player, who has played in a couple of English cup finals, bemoans

American fans' failure to grasp the finer points of the game. "We're still educating the crowd in some ways," he said. "When you play at Wembley Stadium, you've got 80,000 people who know the game inside out." And they know it, Harkes might have added, without the benefit of calculators.

...meanwhile the nation's youngsters are learning to play the game the wrong way

Soccer is making great strides in the United States. But Matthew Gattward, who has been coaching in New York, believes that the Americans need to change their methods at youth level before they can make a realistic challenge to the game's world powers.

I have been a soccer coach in the New York area for the last three years coaching 5 to 16-year-olds, and have witnessed first hand the sudden escalation of interest in the game among youngsters.

Football in the USA is becoming increasingly popular, and in many states is beginning to challenge more traditional American sports. Interest boomed after the success of the 1994 World Cup in America, where the national team exceeded all expectations. This mounting enthusiasm led to increased television coverage of the Premiership equivalent, Major League Soccer. The recent influx of foreign stars such as Italy's Roberto Donadoni and Colombia's Carlos Valderrama has added glamour to the game.

As interest mounts so does participation. Americans plough massive amounts of money, effort and leisure time into sport at all levels. As a result, the facilities in a country where space is abundant are superb. They are world leaders in sport physiology and psychology, and

have the most advanced hi-tech equipment. Sport in school has always been a fundamental part of the curriculum, and has a high profile at college level where it can have a massive following. St. John's University men's soccer team in New York, for instance, attracts 40,000 supporters for home games.

With such factors in their favour as well as a staggering population from which to choose their players, surely it is only a matter of sooner or later before the rest of the footballing world are trying to catch up with the United States. However, from what I have seen I would suggest the safe money would be on later rather than sooner.

There is nothing like starting early and in the USA children as young as five years of age are put into teams to play competitive games. Many are run by volunteer parents whose dedication is admirable, but who have never played the game. They have five-year-olds playing 9, 10 and 11-a-side matches.

Children who don't know the day of the week (and I know, I have asked them) are being told to play at left half-back (midfield). I have seen games where children stand stationary in their designated position for 20 minutes before the swarm of other players migrates in their direction to wake them up. Two or three punts in a game in the general direction of the opponent's goal is about standard for most of these children. The commitment from coaches and parents, and their support is unbelievable. Weekend youth soccer matches and tournaments or "fests" in the USA

attract many teams and become real family occasions.

However, because so few of the coaches have played the game, technique is frequently taught incorrectly: for example toe-punting the ball when shooting. It is all very well having a personalised training top, your own club ball, team water bottles etc, but not if you can't make a five-yard pass without scooping the ball into the air.

Unfortunately, it would seem that for many of these coaches and the parents who watch their young offspring, winning is the be-all and end-all. As the England coach, Glenn Hoddle, pointed out last week about football in England "We need to take the competitive edge from young players, coaches and parents, it is not win at all costs at that age". Hoddle also highlighted the need to play in games of less than 11-a-side on smaller pitches. These sentiments need to be sounded louder and clearer across the States. Once the problem has been pinpointed the solutions will follow.

At an American youth game the testosterone flying around on the sidelines is dangerous. Instructions bellowed to eight-year-olds such as "punt it" followed by roars of approval as a leg is blindly swung and the ball flies up field only to be punted back cannot be said to be creating an intelligent player. Yet this is seen by untutored Americans as a "good play". Teams actually have a player dubbed "big-foot". This is the child, usually the biggest, who can kick the ball the furthest, and who usually plays centre defence.

Statistics constantly churned out on television during MLS games add to this harder-to-better view, and few young players that I encountered could truly boast a good touch because they spend so little time with the ball. There are those that can juggle the ball, but in a game situation cannot read or truly understand the game.

On one occasion when I encouraged a 13-year-old defender to carry the ball forward, he looked surprised and asked "can a defender go that far up field?" Again, this ignorance can be put down to inadequate TV coverage and analysis.

Many teams play the game with tactics more appropriate to an American Football or basketball game. There is an inherent desire to get the ball forwards towards the other end of the field as quickly as possible. Even the ideas behind the 30-second rule of basketball and "no passing backwards over the half-way line" curb the notion of patience within a game. As a result, the idea of passing backwards in football is completely alien in many players right up to 16 years of age.

Defences can often be found standing in a line on the edge of their penalty area waiting for the ball to break through the midfield before springing into life. It is as though they are a "special team" waiting to fulfil their particular role.

Commitment and dedication are natural American traits but until football receives as much coverage as the more traditional sports it seems that soccer in the United States will never challenge as a national sport.

Ten things Man Utd's Karel Poborsky might be missing from the Czech Rep



- 1 The influences of Franz Kafka and Milan Kundera. (Although Poborsky regularly experiences the unbearable lightness of being left on the bench).
- 2 Knecko-zelo-vepro. Dumplings, sauerkraut and roast pork.
- 3 The mixture of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and Art Nouveau architecture that makes Manchester look like a grim industrial wasteland in comparison to Prague. Not that it is, of course.
- 4 Tripe soup.
- 5 Beer towns (Pilsn, Budovice, Velkopopovické), wine regions (Zemnosky and Roudnice) and

slivovice (plum brandy with up to 90 per cent alcohol.)
6 The allure of the Skoda - although a Skoda in Manchester is less likely to be stolen than most cars.
7 The jazz-rock scene that inspired such renowned musicians as Jan Hammer, best remembered for his film themes.
8 The bears, wolves, lynxes, marmosets, martens and mink of Bohemia.
9 The Karlovy Vary spa, known especially for its beneficial effect on diarrhoea and constipation.
10 Playing chess with human pieces in the town of Cesky Krumlov with his Czech mates.

NAME OF THE GAME No 6 THE COBBLERS

Northampton Town were formed in 1897 and became known as "The Cobblers" due to the amount of shoe manufacturing in Northamptonshire. The county is still the base for the Dr Marten's footwear empire of Max Griggs, who used to be on the board at Northampton, but is now the chairman of Rushden & Diamonds of the Vauxhall Conference.

THIS WEEK

On 21 October 1989, Liverpool crashed to a 4-1 defeat at Southampton and the inevitable questions were soon being asked about Liverpool's future. One newspaper report the next day said: "Southampton didn't just annihilate them, they produced a blueprint that, if followed by others, would end the omnipotence Liverpool have enjoyed for so long in English football."

The winning Southampton team, under Chris Nicholl, included Matt Le Tissier, Alan Shearer, Rod Wallace, Paul Rideout and Neil Ruddock. The losers, managed by Kenny Dalglish, had Ian Rush, Peter Beardsley and Alan Hansen in their number.

Sadly for Liverpool's rivals, reports of their demise proved premature, and they won the title in the spring.

HISTORY LESSON

When Chelsea played Tottenham in the Arctic Circle on Thursday, they might reasonably have expected the game to have been abandoned when conditions deteriorated. The modern game, however, proved to be braver (or more foolhardy) than in years past (when the weather was respected).

When England met Argentina in Buenos Aires on 17 May 1953, a monsoon struck and the pitch rapidly became waterlogged. The referee stopped the game after 23 minutes when padding became necessary.

The shortest English game ever took place in 1894, when a blizzard, much like last Thursday's, struck as Stoke played Wolves. It took the referee all of three minutes to stop proceedings, abandon the game and send the crowd of 400 home.

THIS WEEK'S TRANSFERS

TRANSFERS: Paul Peschisoli to Fulham (£1.1m); Martin Shatalov (defender) Alan Shearer (striker) to Manchester City (£500,000); Lea Richardson (midfielder) to Huddersfield (£35,000); David Walton (defender) to Ipswich (£500,000); Douglas Freeman (striker) to Crystal Palace (£300,000); Kevin Muscat (defender) to Crystal Palace (£200,000); Jamie Smith (striker) to Crystal Palace (£2m); Glenn Hoddle (midfielder) to Arsenal to NAC Breda (Netherlands, undisclosed fee); Paul Cook (midfielder) to Tranmere (£250,000); TRIAL: Iliyan Kirov (midfielder) to Bolton (one week).

Contributors: Phil Shaw, Nick Harris
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McGinlay wanted by Sunderland

John McGinlay, the Bolton Wanderers striker, is wanted by Sunderland to help fire their promotion bid. Peter Reid, the Roker Park club's manager, was yesterday quoted as £750,000 fee and hopes to agree a compromise over the weekend.

Reid has also asked about Manchester City's Uwe Rösler, but found the fee prohibitive. Meanwhile, Bolton have taken Franz Carr on trial for a month but they are unlikely to go ahead with the signing of the Bulgarian midfielder Ilian Kirakov, from Aberdeen.

Martin O'Neill's chances of becoming Northern Ireland manager increased when the Irish Football Association declared they would consider a part-time appointment in succession to Bryan Hamilton.

Speculation about the Leicester manager's possible appointment sent his club's shares plummeting on the first day of their Stock Market flotation. Shares instantly dropped 16p in value on the £1.10 opening trading price. "I would rather not make any comment about the Northern Ireland situation at this stage because I don't know the ins and outs of what would be involved," O'Neill said.

The IFAs president, Jim Boyce, said that they intended to get the best man for the job, regardless of whether he was full or part-time. "I would like to think we can attract a top European coach with world experience - someone who has done it," he said.

England's bid to share the 2006 World Cup with Scot-

land and Wales has been scuppered by Fifa. The world's governing body has confirmed they will not consider a bid from England that included venues outside the nation.

The Fifa spokesman, Keith Cooper, said: "The regulations for the World Cup state that it is organised by one single national football association, which is one country in football terms. You might ask why the 2002 World Cup is a joint venture between Japan and South Korea, but it was made clear at the time that it will be an exceptional and unique occasion."

The Portsmouth physiotherapist, Neil Sillett, and the Bradford manager, Chris Kamara, have been charged with misconduct by the Football Association following a mass brawl between the two sides last week. Kamara is to appeal.

The Sheffield United manager, Nigel Spackman, has also been charged with misconduct for remarks he made to the referee following the game against QPR last Saturday.

The transfer of the French striker Samassi Abou's from Cannes to West Ham has run into trouble. "As far as we're concerned the deal's off, unless they ressurect it. They have until Monday to come back to us," said the Hammers' managing director, Peter Storrie.

Tranmere Rovers will make a renewed attempt to sign Derek Whyte from Middlesbrough next week after the proposed £200,000 move broke down over personal terms.

- Alan Nixon



Snow storm: Chelsea's Frank Sinclair and Tromsø's Steiner Nilsen clash in mid-air during the controversial Cup-Winners' Cup tie in Norway on Thursday night. Photograph: Allsport

Gullit's jibe at Uefa

An angry Roud Gullit yesterday accused Uefa of turning the Cup-Winners' Cup into a "Mickey Mouse" competition after Chelsea escaped from their second round first leg tie in Tromsø, Norway, with a narrow 3-2 defeat played out in blizzard conditions.

"This isn't Mickey Mouse, it's a real competition," said the Chelsea manager. "I asked the president of the Norwegian federation what he felt, and he said that they would never have allowed the game to go ahead if it was a league match."

"The referee didn't want to play but he had been told by Uefa that he could postpone it, that it had to go ahead."

All is not well with McLeish

Alex McLeish has warned his players he wants a marked improvement from his Motherwell side when they take on Aberdeen today to avoid him "running the gauntlet" with the Scottish Premier League club's spirited support.

The Well lost 4-1 at home to Hearts three weeks ago and last time out were humiliated 4-0 at Dundee United. McLeish called that display "below Junior League level" and hopes clear-the-air talks with his team this week prove to have been effective. "We have to do ourselves justice against Aberdeen," the manager said. "I want a positive reaction from the players. If they don't do more tomorrow it is me who is going to run the gauntlet with the fans."

Seventh-placed Motherwell go into the match against the bottom club on a run of three successive defeats and will not be helped by the lengthy absence of Willie Falconer, who broke an ankle at Tannadice.

The league leaders, Rangers, may be without Sergio Porrini, the Italian midfielder who hurt an ankle in training, as they go to Tannadice aiming to preserve their advantage over Celtic, who are two points adrift. They play St Johnstone at Parkhead looking for a 10th successive victory over domestic opposition.

Kilmarnock will be without their goalkeeper Dragoje Levovic at home against Hibernian. He is away on international duty with Yugoslavia.

Impoverished City's stock falls in futures market

"City boos for Blair" screamed one of this week's headlines. Within hours, Franny Lee and Frank Clark were enduring a similar experience, and the resentment which gripped Maine Road after the defeat by Stoke last night, are also being expressed by City fans.

Rangers, relegated with City 18 months ago, are also discovering that buying out an unpopular regime is no guarantee of instant success. Already competing for support with Chelsea, they now find another of their local rivals, QPR, struggling to reinvent themselves by lavishing unprecedented sums on new blood.

Paul Peschisolidi became the third and most credible capture by Mohamed Al Fayed's new chief operations officer, Kevin Keegan, and manager Ray Wilkins when he arrived from West Bromwich Albion for £1.1m yesterday.

As a Canadian of Italian parentage, who has Karren Brady for a wife and Eric Hall as his agent, the diminutive striker could also be said to be upholding Craven Cottage's nonconformist traditions. The first seven-figure signing in the English game's third grade, he goes straight in at home to Northampton today.

Elsewhere, there is an intriguing First Division basement struggle between Huddersfield and Portsmouth. The coaching acumen of Terry Yorath, while not quite enough to take Wales or the Lebanon to the World Cup finals, will be pitted against the influence of Terry Venables, who is on the verge of achieving precisely that with Australia but is having a less beneficial effect on Pompey right now.

- Phil Shaw

Main fixtures and pools check

Today
2.0 (unless stated)
FA Cup 1st Round
1 Coventry v Everton
2 Liverpool v Derby
3 Aston v Luton
4 Newcastle v Blackburn
5 Sheffield Wed v QPR
6 Southampton v Barnsley
7 Walsley v Leeds

Nationwide League
First Division
8 Birmingham v Oxford
9 Bradford v Crewe
10 Huddersfield v Portsmouth
11 Ipswich v Bury
12 Middlesbrough v Port Vale
13 Stockport v Wolves
14 Stoke v Sunderland
15 Swindon v Northampton
16 Walsley v Charlton
17 WBA v Sheffield Wed

Second Division
18 Bristol R v Boreham
19 Burnley v Southend
20 Chesterfield v Wycombe
21 Fulham v Northampton
22 Gillingham v Plymouth
23 Grimsby v Walsley
24 Luton v Shrewsbury
25 Millwall v Wigan
26 Preston v Shrewsbury
27 Southend v Oldham
28 Walsley v Bristol City
29 York City v Carlisle

Third Division
30 Cardiff v Hartlepool
31 Chester v Macclesfield
32 Exeter v Southport
33 Hail v Brighton
34 Lorient v Colchester
35 Lincoln v Darlington
36 Mansfield v Barnet
37 Notts Co v Cambridge
38 Peterborough v Torquay
39 Rochdale v Rotherham
40 Shrewsbury v Barnet

Bolton's Scottish League
Premier Division
41 Celtic v St Johnstone
42 Dundee United v Aberdeen
43 Kilmarnock v Hibernian
44 Motherwell v Aberdeen

First Division
45 Falkirk v Dundee
46 Morton v Arbroath
47 Partick v Hibernian
48 Raith Rovers v Albion
49 St Johnstone v Arbroath

Second Division
50 Brechin v Forfar
51 Clyde v Clydebank
52 East Fife v Inverness City
53 Livingston v Stirling Albion
54 Queen of Scots v Stranraer

Third Division
55 Albion v Queen's Park
56 Alloa v East Stirling
57 Arbroath v Montrose
58 Dunfermline v Forfar
59 Ross County v Cowdenbeath

Tomorrow
FA Cup 1st Round
Anfield v Aston Villa (2.0)
Bolton v Chelsea (2.0)
First Division
QPR v Manchester City (1.0)

WEEKEND FIXTURE GUIDE

TODAY

Football

GM VALLEY CONFERENCE: Dover v Woking; Gillingham v Torquay; Stevenage v Huddersfield.
FA CHALLENGER CUP Fourth round qualifying: Torquay v Woking; Stevenage v Huddersfield; Dover v Woking; Gillingham v Torquay; Stevenage v Huddersfield; Dover v Woking; Gillingham v Torquay; Stevenage v Huddersfield.

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Who is the greatest?

When selecting your players for the International Hall of Fame, you have the chance to make FOUR votes and four votes ONLY. Remember your votes count, as the top five players overall from all the votes received will automatically go into the Hall of Fame.

In the table below, we have listed 250 players who could all be in contention. To make your selection, all you have to do is select your choice of up to four players. If you wish you may select only one, but FOUR is the maximum. Select up to four players, noting down their code numbers and then call 0930 565 996.

First of all, you will be asked to carry out a quick test to determine what type of phone you have. You will then be directed to enter your chosen players.

The players

CODE	PLAYER	TEAM
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Rover returning to Dublin to with an all-round education

Jeff Kenna returned to Ireland yesterday as the Republic began preparing for Wednesday's World Cup play-off first leg against Belgium at Lansdowne Road. The Blackburn Rovers defender freely admits he is not the most 'flamboyant' of players but few have been as involved in Mick McCarthy's rebuilding.

Before flying back to his Dublin birthplace to prepare for the big game he talked about Ireland and the new regime at Ewood Park.

Had I known I would never have asked the question, but I'd arrived at Blackburn Rovers' Brockhall training complex after Jeff Kenna and I did not know.

Our interview was winding down and we were discussing more general topics than Wednesday's World Cup play-off and the Rovers' revival under Roy Hodgson. We moved on to the belief among some managers that it is becoming increasingly hard to motivate players because they are so well paid. "There's this image," I said, "in all innocence, of footballers driving around in Porsches and all that." Kenna never flickered as he defended the modern footballer, invoking personal ambition and pride of achievement as his leading witnesses.

A few minutes later we finished the interview and Kenna, pausing to disrupt a pool match on Brockhall's blue baize tables between Tim Flowers and Chris Coleman, escorted the photographer and myself back to the car park. After Kenna left us to prepare for training the photographer turned and said: "Great question about the Porsche - by the way, that's his car." I followed his gaze, to a gleaming, metallic, midnight-blue Porsche.

Honestly Jeff, I wasn't thinking of you. Such is Kenna's low profile, as a footballer and a personality, it was a surprise to find him driving a Porsche. As a footballer he is, in his own description, "not flamboyant, just a lowly full-back who does his job". As a man he is married and appears, on brief acquaintance, to be polite and pleasant, someone who does not mention an agent when you request an interview and who seems pleased that Rovers train in the after-

noon as well in the morning under Hodgson as it legitimises his profession. "It's like a proper job with proper hours now," he said. If not quite Volvo man - he is a Premiership footballer after all - he appears more Rover, perhaps Land Rover man.

Today he is not driving anything, just hitching a ride on Mick McCarthy's World Cup bandwagon which is picking up a nice head of steam in advance of Wednesday's Dublin date with Belgium.

Though the 27-year-old Blackburn defender was in at the end of Jack Charlton's reign, his mix of flexibility, ball-playing and industriousness typifies the new Ireland under McCarthy. Only Alan McLoughlin has played more football in McCarthy's 19 games in charge - a statistic Kenna greeted with surprise and enthusiasm.

The first six of his 20 caps were won under Charlton. "He was great even if he didn't know my name at first - he just called me 'yer man'. Everybody knew their job with him, there were no shades of grey and you knew what to do in certain situations - he told you so."

Kenna's last match under Charlton was the Euro '96 play-

off with the Dutch at Anfield which Ireland lost 2-0. "I imagine Wednesday will be similar," Kenna said. "It is like a cup-tie over two legs and the atmosphere will be electric in Dublin. It means a lot to the fans, they've got a taste for travelling to these competitions now and they love it. France isn't too far to go and they'll have been putting a bit aside, stopped having that extra pint in the pub."

BY GLENN MOORE

"The Dutch game was really awe-inspiring, to be involved in a game of that magnitude so early in my international career was fantastic. Being a footballer is all about playing those sort of games."

Though a right-back by choice, Kenna has played all over for the Republic. With Denis Irwin, Gary Kelly, Steve Staunton, Kenny Cunningham, Terry Phelan and Curtis Fleming providing full-back competition, his versatility has come in handy.

"It can be a double-edged sword but, given the competition it has probably been a benefit," he said. "When Mick first took over I played on the left side of three centre-backs,

then it was left wing-back, right wing-back and midfield. He was probably trying to find a position for me. I'm now predominantly a right-back, but it was a good education. You get to appreciate different positions and develop your game."

"He's been terrific for us," McCarthy said. "He played in midfield for Jack and for me and elsewhere. He'd go up front or play in the nets if you asked him, he's that sort of lad, very accommodating. He's given a lot to us and it means a lot to him to play for us."

Kenna has also spent a lot of time on the left flank at Blackburn, with Graeme Le Saux first being injured then moving on. Last Saturday he was back at right-back, the position he made his name in with Southampton. Having first become involved with the club at the age of 12, travelling over from his Dublin home during school holidays, he came through Dave Merrington's youth team alongside Alan Shearer, Neil Maddison and Jason Dodd. Then in March 1995, eight months into his fourth successive relegation battle, he was whisked away for £1.5m to Premiership leaders Blackburn.

"It was a tidal wave of emotion," he recalled. "One week we were up and flying, the next we were losing and Manchester United were winning. I don't know what I felt, I was just all over the place. My feet never touched the ground. I found the pressure at the top of the league a lot more intense, than at the bottom. At that stage it was a case of getting over the line."

He missed qualifying for a medal by one game, but "the club were kind enough to get one for me". Then came disappointment. "You like to think when you move on you are bettering yourself, that you'll be challenging for honours. Winning the title was fantastic but we then had two mediocre seasons by comparison. Last season was all too familiar."

"This season there is a buzz about the place, we began well and are trying to maintain it. A lot of football is about confidence. Last year if we got a goal we would think 'can we hang on?' Now we think 'we can win this'. We were looking for draws last year, now we go out for wins."

Since the squad, said Kenna, is "more or less the same as last year" the difference would appear to be the new manager, Roy Hodgson. Kenna has played under nine managers so it is quite significant when he says of the latest "he is totally

different to anything I've experienced before".

This is partly practical, the pasta diet and the Italian fitness coach with the 30-minute warm-ups and 20-minute warm-downs, and partly mental. "He has that Italian mentality: you don't have to win games four or five-nil. You don't get extra points for winning by four goals.

Get one goal and if you don't concede you win. He is trying to instill that in the team."

This may sound boring to watch, but Kenna adds: "We are also trying to play through midfield more now, instead of getting it up to the front men and playing from there. It's still classic 4-4-2 but we try to pass more. We're not too far off the

championship side. If you take Shearer out of any team it is bound to be a big loss, but Sutton's [Chris Sutton] up there now. He's got to take on his mantle and become a great player in his own right."

While his Blackburn teammates are at Newcastle today Kenna will be in Kildare, training with his Irish colleagues, or

curled up in his hotel room with a book ("I tend not to read them around the club - the lads rip the last chapter out") and following the scores.

Then it is Dublin on Wednesday, a chance to set Ireland's new generation on the road to France and to reflect on his own progress. When we discussed commitment, and the

alleged lack of it in some players, the Porsche-driving Kenna was far too polite to talk about others but said of himself: "I've worked very hard to get in this position, to get the rewards, and I want to keep the standard up. You can't afford to let yourself go, someone else might get your jersey and I've still got a lot to achieve."



Jeff Kenna: Football has become a 'proper job with proper hours' under Blackburn's new manager Roy Hodgson

Photograph: Simon Wilkinson

Boom time for the game's boot-room God squad

Chris Evans was surely stretching the point to claim, as he did last week in his new Virgin Radio breakfast show, that football is the new religion - on the basis that most games are now played on Sky, that Southampton are called the Saints, that Newcastle play in the colours of a nun's habit and that West Ham's midfield is blessed (intermittently) by Ian Bishop.

To stretch it further he might have added that Stockport's attack is led by an Angel (Brett), that a Canon once sponsored the Football League, and that an Archdeacon (Owen) was ever-present for Carlisle last season.

But Evans was being flippant. In fact, the link between football and religion stems mainly from their common vernacular - fans worship, while managers pray for a result and hope someone up there is smiling on them.

However, the fact remains that more people watch Sky's Sunday football offering than make an offering themselves in church on a Sunday - and that's despite Sky only being available to just over a quarter of the population.

It can't be a statistic that pleases the 55 chaplains affiliated to Football League

clubs, even if the majority of them are, er, disciples of the game themselves.

The Rev Gary Piper, for example, has followed Fulham fan since boyhood; it was a proverbial dream come true when he became the club's chaplain seven years ago. He still wants them to win as much as the next fan, but for reasons that are now more professional than personal.

West Ham's chaplain, the Rev Elwin Cockett, is a West Ham season ticket holder and a familiar sight riding around the East End on his claret Honda 650cc, while the Rev Nigel Sands is in his 24th year as Crystal Palace's chaplain and has written seven club histories.

The Rev John Boyers, meanwhile, is a Grimsby Town fan at heart, but admits to having a soft spot for Manchester United. But Boyers actually has an excuse for this allegiance since he's the chaplain at Old Trafford, as well as being head of the registered charity Score (Sports Chaplaincy Offering Resources And Encouragement), an organisation which matches clergymen to clubs where their role is to offer "spiritual input, to listen and help the people connected with the clubs when needed".

Hard though it may be to



OLIVIA BLAIR
REVEALS THE
GROWING
INFLUENCE OF
THE CLERGY
AT CLUBS

imagine clergymen spreading the word to players whose extra-curricular activities more usually involve cues than pews, club chaplains are becoming increasingly commonplace. (Don Revie was the first manager to appoint a chaplain at Leeds in the 1960s; when Boyers became Watford's chaplain in the 1970s they numbered just three.)

Piper, who writes a column in Fulham's programme on ex-players entitled "Missing Flock", claims that "players are still human beings with spiritual dimensions who are aware of their vulnerability".

Part of his remit is to act as a "shoulder to cry on - although they might not like that terminology" - to players left on the sidelines through injury.

But don't imagine that chaplains mingle with players and fans clad in their Sunday best, bible in one hand and collection box in the other. Their work is as unseen but as committed off the pitch as, say, David Batty's is on it, which, according to the QPR chaplain, Robert de Berry, is vital.

He says being at the fringe is "a blessing, since there are enough egos that need polishing already. In many cases you're dealing with quite limited people elevated to this extraordinary status. Part of my challenge is to inject a little thoughtfulness into their lives".

Such a philosophy must be working if even Andy Cole admits that reading the Bible helped him at United.

Generally, a club chaplain's daily tasks might range from counselling an insecure YTS youngster to scattering a deceased fan's ashes on the pitch.

However, what to some fans is the ultimate act of worship - getting married on the pitch - is still illegal (by law you must have a roof over your head when you tie the knot). But maybe the "death do us part"

bit is inappropriate to football, anyway. At Millwall, a Garden of Remembrance caters for the increasing number of fans preferring their ashes to be scattered at the site of their happiest (or not so happiest) memories rather than next to their nearest and dearest.

This is a new spin on Bill Shankly's quote (you know the one) and it's already caught on in Europe. When Ajax moved to their new Amsterdam Arena they donated turf from the old De Meer stadium to the city's cemetery where cremators created a miniature pitch for fans' ashes, complete with the original dugout.

In Germany, fans can now be buried in coffins designed in their club's colours. It can't be long before Premier League chairmen catch on to such a commercial opportunity.

But the biggest link English football has with things theological remains those clubs who started life as church teams, among them Fulham (St Andrew's), Everton (St Domingo), Southampton (St Mary's) and Wolves (St Luke's Blakenhall).

Fulham seem to have had their prayers answered (albeit by Mohamed Al Fayed). How the rest could do with some divine intervention.

FAN'S EYE VIEW

NO 229 TELETXT

BY DAVID RIVERS

Never mind "true supporters" lorded it over their couch-potato rivals, what about those of us who would go to watch our favourite team, but have been forced to live on the other side of the country?

Mysteriously, my family refuse to enter into negotiations regarding the perfectly plausible ruse of disappearing every Saturday to make a 400-mile round trip to the leafy lanes of Hertfordshire to watch Watford.

For us, it is Teletext or nothing. In my case, "nothing" could be substituted with an afternoon at Elland Road, or York City, but one can't just go changing allegiance at the drop of a hat. No, on Saturday afternoons, I am with the Hornets in spirit, staring at a blue television screen, chanting various mantras ("come on you 'orns"), willing a goal to appear.

It is not easy to produce the right conditions for such a spiritual experience. One has to fight off various unwelcome spirits, which invade in the form of family members seemingly determined to spoil one's afternoon.

Notoriously non-sporting, they look with disdain at the screen and make grunting

noises. You have to be mercenary. My 11-year-old son who treats any sporting occasion with grave suspicion waits a new video under my nose.

There are tears in the kitchen. ("Dad won't let me watch it"). The inevitable kangaroo court follows. I am found guilty, but my earnest plea in defence, ("they'll go top if they win this. It's a milestone. Yes I'll mop the kitchen floor as soon as it's finished") earns me a stay of execution. If only Watford's was as watertight that afternoon.

Once I was forced to abandon the Teletext in response to my partner's urgent cry from the kitchen. Expecting a nasty cut from the tin-opener at the very least, I was hardly nullified to find the object of the drama was a bird she had spied in the garden.

"I think it's a Blackcap," she hissed. "Keep still." I later discovered it was at that precise moment (the 72nd minute) that York City scored against us. I will always attribute that carelessly conceded goal to the fact I had abandoned the cause, and my lack of dedication had been

punished. I had after all been successfully helping the lads to keep a clean sheet through sheer willpower. I decided to rethink my plan to join the RSPB.

Worse, my spot of ornithology had cost me not only my seat but the channel had been changed, with the teenager holding the handset in a rather unnecessarily covetous manner. I was allowed a peek at the score... we were losing to a goal scored by someone called Tolson.

"It's a foreign visitor," my wife shouted from the kitchen. At least she was wrong on that point. Tolson sounded, if not Yorkshire definitely not Italian either.

On Teletext, spectating is much, much harder. In your mind there are 11 heroes out there strutting their stuff. You imagine them all but overrunning the opposition in front of a purring crowd.

The only problem is, it's now 3.30 and they have not scored. Is Ceefax guilty of not keeping up with the play?

ITV has the same score. I decide they're more likely to score on BBC's Ceefax and resume page 307. They have not, York City have. You are speechless.



SPORT

Saturday 25 October 1997

Villeneuve confident he has power to take pole

There were certainly no clues as to the outcome of Sunday's much-anticipated climax to the Formula One championship in practice at Jerez yesterday.

But as David Tremayne reports from Spain, it was the drivers using Bridgestone tyres who set the early pace.

Bridgestone's runners threw a spanner into the works of the carefully orchestrated Schumacher v Villeneuve shootout here yesterday, as Olivier Panis, Damon Hill and Rubens Barrichello took three of the top four placings after initial practice.

It was a promising showing by the Japanese tyre manufacturer, which hopes to end its first season in the upper echelons of the sport by securing the maiden victory that eluded Hill in Hungary in August.

But Michael Schumacher, who was only ninth fastest for Ferrari, was not perturbed, for Friday's practice times traditionally mean little. Many drivers use the day simply to set up their car for qualifying on Saturday, or often for the race itself.

"That's exactly what we concentrated on today," Schumacher said. "The car generally feels good in race trim, so I am quite happy. Today's position really means nothing as I used only one set of tyres, while the other front-runners either used new tyres or went out late when there was rubber on the track, which improved grip."

Jacques Villeneuve finished the day third, despite going off the track at one stage during the morning. "I feel very good with how the sessions have gone today," the Canadian said. "Usually we have not been so quick during the Friday practices, but here in Jerez our homework has come together well. It is very important to be at the front of the starting grid on this circuit, because the tyres are likely to go off quickly. Also since it's a very difficult circuit on which to overtake."

Schumacher holds a one-point lead over Villeneuve, which means that whichever of them wins the race will take the championship. Ferrari may go to the line tomorrow running a new differential and revised dampers, following further test work undertaken since Schumacher's victory in Japan, where Villeneuve raced under appeal against his one-race ban for yet another infringement of the yellow flag rule.

"We gained a couple of tenths at our test track, Fiorano," Schumacher said, "which was a surprise because all we were expecting was a better feel to the car and maybe a better balance. Overall, we have seen more improvement in the last three races than we thought we could expect."

Enough to push him back into the lead which he had lost to Villeneuve in the recent Luxembourg Grand Prix. But part of Ferrari's recent improvement is also believed to have come from a controversial front wing which droops at high speed, creating greater downforce.

The Williams team has protested to the FIA, motor sport's governing body, that



Eyes on the prize: Michael Schumacher prepares himself and his Ferrari for victory, and the world drivers' championship, tomorrow in Jerez, Spain

Photograph: Reuters

the wing is too flexible, and asked for a ruling on its legality. But policing the rules concerning rigid aerodynamic components is difficult and although the matter is under investigation, the wing remains eligible for this crucial race.

Villeneuve, meanwhile, remains confident that he can reverse the trend and that Schumacher's luck is about to

run out. "This weekend will be all about qualifying," he said. "I'm sure it will be a straight fight between Michael and I, but I hope it's not going to be a case of Michael taking me off, like we have seen in the past. To be honest, I think Michael's had all the luck he's going to have this year. And I think he knows it. Our car is very strong, as it has been for the last few races."

It should be pretty good on this track because of the combination of different corners. There are a few tight corners here which will not be our cup of tea, but there are also a lot of high-speed corners, which our car likes."

Panis, however, is confident that he can continue to push his Prost-Mugen-Honda to the fore. "I had a good feeling with

the car from the beginning," he said. "It looks as if Bridgestone is going to be a precious ally for us here in Jerez."

Villeneuve and Schumacher both want a clear track ahead of them, and to win from the front. The last thing either wants is interlopers who might complicate the points-scoring permutations by getting in the way of their *mano a mano* fight.

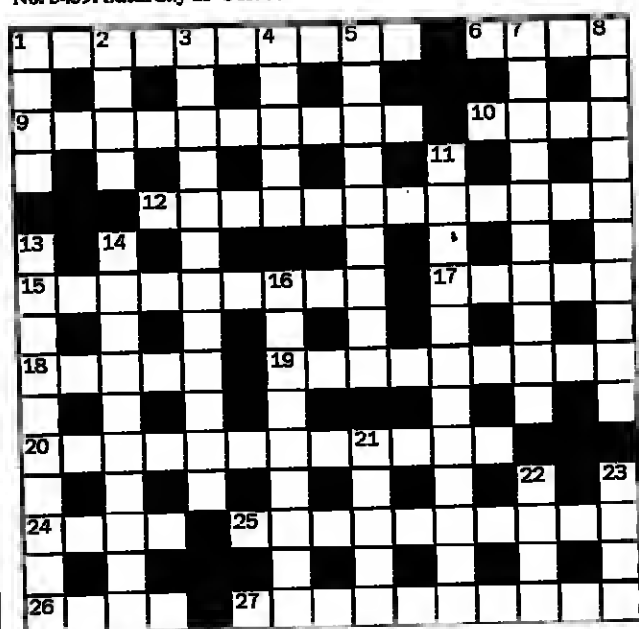
but the indications are that things might not be that simple. European Grand Prix (Jerez, Spain, Sunday) Practice times: 1 O Panis (Fr) Prost-Mugen-Honda 1:22.05sec; 2 J Villeneuve (Can) Williams-Ford 1:22.06sec; 3 M Hakkinen (Fin) McLaren-Mercedes 1:23.04sec; 4 R Barrichello (Br) Stewart-Ford 1:23.05sec; 5 D Coulthard (GB) McLaren-Mercedes 1:23.40sec; 6 H-H Frentzen (Ger) Williams-Renault 1:23.52sec; 7 J Alesi (Fr) Benetton-Renault 1:23.74sec; 8 J Jenson (GB) Benetton-Renault 1:23.75sec; 9 M Schumacher (Ger) Ferrari 1:23.82sec; 10 R Schumacher (Ger) Jordan-Ford 1:23.83sec; 11 J Magnussen (Den) Stewart-Ford 1:23.88sec; 12 E Irvine (Sco) Ferrari 1:23.89sec; 13 G Berger (Aust) Benetton-Renault 1:23.92sec; 14 G Fisichella (It) Jordan-Ford 1:24.26sec; 15 U Katajama (Japan) Minardi-Hart 1:24.32sec; 16 J Herbert (GB) Sauber-Peterson 1:24.50sec; 17 S Nakano (Japan) Prost-Mugen-Honda 1:24.72sec; 18 P Dini (Fr) Arrows-Yamaha 1:24.75sec; 19 M Salo (Fin) Tyrrell-Ford 1:25.02sec; 20 N Fortuna (Arg) Sauber-Peterson 1:25.14sec; 21 J Verstappen (Neth) Tyrrell-Ford 1:25.32sec; 22 T Marquies (Br) Minardi-Hart 1:26.86sec.

● Pedro Diniz, who partnered Damon Hill this season, has signed a two-year deal to continue driving for Arrows. Brazilian Diniz, who competes in his 50th race this weekend, will drive with Mika Salo next year.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3439, Saturday 25 October

By Spuris



Friday's solution

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Last Saturday's solution

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ACROSS

- Machine, sort author has? (10)
- Officer overlooking leaseholder's place (4)
- Deny Detective Inspector's involvement in arranged killing (10)
- Card holding making you pass? (4)
- Elements, perhaps, of different types you'd find in Malvern? (7,5)
- Disgusting punter upset about poor nag (9)
- The rest of the art world? (5)
- Box containing oriental weapon (5)
- Country almost subsumed within a single whole? It's the stuff of fiction (9)
- Push car is dazzling, with special window fittings (6,6)
- Resistant units using official insignia (4)
- Layer in brickwork going maddy? (4,6)
- Place for some collectors' items (4)
- Bolder plea for reform of what's hopelessly bad? (10)

DOWN

- Parasite identified in a very short time (4)
- Penultimate hall going for six? (4)
- Sisters with a job to do? (7,5)
- Music label featuring in German article (5)
- Record broken by new champion, a wizard (9)
- Phyllis's nervous reaction when wild Irishman comes over (10)
- Minimises the importance of daily prunes when one no longer appears irregular? (10)
- An oxymoron, of course (5-3-4)
- Rank-and-file cheers, giving support to police informer (5-5)
- Regulation ignored by the over-seventies? (5,5)
- Herald beat a drum, unusually (9)
- Drive that is completed by unqualified motorist - police will be involved (5)
- Agency offering advice about right type of seafood? (4)
- East River in Maine? It's nothing more than a lake (4)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: J Walton, Epsom; L Thomson, Warrington; P White, Sandown; D Filmer, Horsham; A Besse, London W11.

Forgetful Tufnell given suspended ban

Philip Tufnell is a cricketer who has courted controversy as Aristotle Onassis once courted beautiful women - often and not always with regard to those close to him. Derek Pringle was at Lord's yesterday to hear the outcome of the spin bowler's latest misdemeanour.

Philip Tufnell remembered to turn up at Lord's yesterday, something he claimed he forgot to do at Chelmsford, when he failed to submit a urine sample in a random drugs test during Middlesex's last game of the season against Essex.

Normally, such absent-mindedness is tantamount to testing positive and is an admission of guilt. Under the chairmanship of Gerard Elias QC, however, the five-man disciplinary panel of the England and Wales Cricket Board accepted the England spinner's explanation and Tufnell left the hearing with a suspended 18-month ban, a £1,000 fine, and £250 costs.

As expected when a judge is involved, there are conditions attached. Although Tufnell will be able to tour the West Indies with England early next year, the first part of the punishment - a suspended rather than imposed ban - will only sit and providing the spinner submits himself to a dope test of the Board's choosing in 1997 and 1998, and that he does not provide a positive sample during the period of his suspension.

Considering cricket's image as upholder of Victorian values, it is inevitable that there will be those who will feel that Tufnell has been fortunate to escape so lightly. And that in view of his brilliant 11 for 93 against Australia in the final Test, some serious behind the scenes lobbying to ensure his presence in the West Indies had gone on.

More pertinent, though, is that having been part of the Sports Council's doping control programme since 1985, that cricket is not seen to be looking after one of its own. It was a point Tim Lamb, the ECB's spokesman, but not a panel

member, was quick to counter. "I can assure you," said Lamb, "that each case is treated on its merit and that the integrity of the dope testing procedure is more important than any selection for the national side."

However, when asked what would be done to ensure that other players could not use the same excuse - Viv Richards refused a dope test in 1993 without censure - he admitted that the procedure would have to be tightened up, though he felt the punishment meted out on Tufnell would send a powerful message to players.

Leaving the three-hour meeting Tufnell, who has 14 days to appeal, had been advised not to comment on the meeting. Instead the ECB issued a statement pointing out that the Middlesex spinner had four charges brought against him.

The first two, which Tufnell pleaded guilty to, included failing to take the drug test and failing to follow the procedures of the test. The last two, which he denied, were the wilful failure to provide a specimen and the

deliberate avoidance of the test by his early departure from the ground.

Tufnell, nicknamed "the Cat", claimed to have been in some discomfort on the day in question, some ointment for a wasp sting apparently getting into his eyes. This was backed up by his county captain, Mark Ramprakash, who accompanied Tufnell to the hearing.

Like his denial during the winter, when the proprietors of a Christchurch restaurant accused him of smoking cannabis in a disabled toilet - an allegation that when investigated by the tour manager, John Barclay, was found to have no substance - Tufnell's version of events has again been taken at face value.

Indeed, the panel's leniency was probably swayed by his aborted attempt - not many bowlers would have much fluid on board after two sessions in the field - to provide a sample in the tea break on the day in question.

Nevertheless, Tufnell can probably count himself fortunate that he was not given an 18-month ban as Ed Giddins was at this time last year. Here is surely a "Cat" with more than nine lives.

Published by Newspaper Publishing PLC, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3UL, and printed at Mirror Colour Print, St Albans Road, Watford. Back issues available from Historic Newspapers, 01988 840370. Saturday 25 October 1997 No. 3439 as a newspaper with the Print Office.

hell I spilled the abbot

St Benedict

for it is written

Luke 4:8



هكذا من الاله



Saturday 25 October 1997



6.79% (7.1%APR)
MORTGAGE RATE FIXED
FOR FIVE YEARS UNTIL
DECEMBER 2002.

[illegible]

(1) Christmas bouquets, £18.99, expires 31/1/99; (2) 36-hour returns, Dover to Calais, £29, Expires 19/12/97; (3) professional course, £399.99; (4) 12-bottle crates, £49.99; (5) Minimum spend £500; (6) Shelf advanced feet; (7) PremierLine customers; (8) Minimum spend £20; (9) Shows must be borrowed on C&G Air Miles Mortgage, minimum £5,000; (10) Excludes cash advances, purchase of travellers' cheques and foreign currency, interest and other charges; (11) Flights must be taken by 31/3/99

Source: Air Miles (The Information)

**12/GAVIN
GREEN
Diana's legacy
to drivers**

2/PERSONAL FINANCE



NIC
CICUTTI

Has the Pru no shame?

A few years ago, the then chief executive of Prudential, a chap called Mick Newmarch, had a brainwave. He was so convinced a new financial regulator being set up at the time – the Personal Investment Authority (PIA) – would be a dud, that he refused to join it.

Instead, the Pru remained directly regulated by the Securities and Investments Board (SIB), the senior City watchdog, the core of which will form the new super-regulator favoured by the Labour Government.

Old Mick has gone. But with hindsight, his "refusenik" approach has served his former employer rather well. Had the Pru been watched over by the PIA, there is no doubt that it would have been hit with the largest-ever fine to be levied on any financial services company, running into many millions of pounds.

The issue (isn't it always?) was the company's inability to meet its deadlines for compensating victims of the pension transfer scandal, more than 50,000 of whom were Pru customers. By one of these strange quirks, the SIB is not allowed to fine its members, while the PIA is.

So, a public reprimand for the Pru then, one that was speedily accepted by its spokespeople, along with promises (aren't there always more promises?) to give redress to those wronged far more swiftly. Quite what any redress will be worth to those who have already died is a subject we won't go into.

But hang on, wasn't the Pru already one of those companies supposedly

"named and shamed" by Labour's Treasury Minister, Helen Liddell, for its failures on the same issue a few months ago? What good did that do? A good question: the answer is very little.

Every few months we hear again of the failures of insurers to make reparations to those whom they shafted so beautifully a few years ago.

What is now amply clear is that the strategy of "name and shame", the hope that by pointing the finger at companies they will do better, is failing. These people have little or no sense of shame.

What is now needed is a new approach: massive fines not on companies but on their directors. Taking £50,000 out of some bloated board member's pocket would do wonders to ensure compensation is paid more swiftly. Levying a fine of £1,000 for each day that redress goes over deadline is another. Disqualification from ever working in the City would be another option. Will Mrs Liddell act? Don't hold your breath.

Nice to see M&G, the vast fund manager, announcing a revamp of its product range. And not a minute too soon. The company, which has billions of pounds of small policyholders' money under its control, faced a growing exodus of redemptions from its funds, as they consistently failed to deliver competitive returns. It is too soon to say what will happen now. But the outflow of money from M&G in the past few months is a lesson to all fund managers: treat investors as dumb animals at your peril.

MONEY MAKEOVER

When pension options have to be left open

Name: Angela Sargeant
Age: 37
Occupation: Accountant

The problem: Angela works for a publishing company on a fixed-term contract, expiring in March. She earns £35,000 plus discretionary bonuses. There are no other financial benefits, including pensions, from her present employment, although Angela has some preserved pension benefits from previous employers.

She has a repayment mortgage of £50,000 with Abbey National, which has about 13 years to run, while her property is presently worth £75,000.

Angela, who is single, also has about £16,000 in Premium Bonds, the Government-backed prize draw. She has no life cover. She would like advice on pensions planning and income protection in the event of illness.

The adviser: David Wright, a director at Johnstone Douglas, financial planning consultants, Lennig House, Masons Avenue, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 9XS, (0181 686 0660)

The advice: With regard to your mortgage, I agree that there is no need for you to have life cover while you do not have any financial dependents.

As for your Premium Bonds, which you may use over the short to medium-term as deposit for another house, if that is the purpose, your money is best left in a very low-risk environment, such as where it is.

Given that you are on a one-year employment contract, a personal pension is the most obvious choice. However, you need a pension which is flexible. This is because you may renew your contract, or take on a contract with another



Angela Sargeant: Working on fixed-term contracts makes pension choice important. Photograph: Philip Meech

company, or indeed join another firm as a full-time employee which may well operate some form of pension scheme.

Therefore any pension needs to be transferred in or stopped, increased or decreased, at any time without penalty. There are companies that offer these types of contract. You wished to look at a fund that had a low to medi-

um range of investment risk. Based on your current age, you are eligible to contribute 20 per cent of your gross taxable earnings in the current tax year into a personal pension.

We agreed that you would consider investing a lump sum of £3,000 gross, coupled with a monthly contribution of £300 gross, both to a selected re-

irement age of 60. In addition I have included a costing for premium waiver, which will pay the pension for you should you not be able to work through accident, sickness or ill-health, after a deferment period of six months. In this way, you "insure" your pension payments. The cost of this benefit is 2.25 per cent of the premium.

I recommend Scottish Mutual which, despite its name, is no longer a mutual office, having been acquired by Abbey National in 1991. The scheme offers a flexible contract, coupled with a competitive charging structure and has a choice of funds to suit your risk profile.

The funds I recommend are Scottish Mutual's controlled risk funds. With these arrangements you are guaranteed a percentage of the funds that cannot go down. This can be chosen between 95 and 100 per cent.

The guarantee is renewed on a quarterly basis in January, April, July and October. If you choose the 100 per cent option your money is guaranteed at the end of each quarter to be worth no less than the original investment. The 95 per cent option gives a maximum downside exposure of 5 per cent each quarter. At the end of each quarter, any gains in the fund are "consolidated" and the guarantee starts again.

At present, you have nothing protecting your income. Your employer will pay some amount of sick pay for up to eight weeks. Permanent health insurance pays an income should you not be able to work due to accident, sickness or ill-health. It carries a deferment period and has to be written to a final age. You should look at a

three to six-month deferment, with benefits payable to age 60. We looked at covering for 50 per cent of your income.

I recommend Friends Provident, one of the largest providers of this contract. Its claims experience is vast and it offers various types of policy.

There is also critical illness cover, which pays a tax-free lump sum on diagnosis of a range of diseases, including heart attacks, strokes, cancer and multiple sclerosis. I recommend General Accident, a leading provider whose contract covers a comprehensive range of medical conditions.

To cover your mortgage in the eventuality of a critical illness claim for the rest of its term, the cost would be £15.46 per month.

Once your pension and protection cover are in place we can then look at other aims, such as moving to a larger property. The majority of your savings should be in short-term investments where there is no risk to capital.

If a new property is to be purchased, your savings must be depleted and you would need to consider some form of savings for the medium to long term. I would recommend a PEP. Although the future of PEPs after April 1999 is uncertain, they still remain one of the most tax-efficient investments currently available.

The verdict: I'm quite pleased with the advice I was given. But what I would have preferred is a choice of different products with an explanation of their different charges. Also, I'm not entirely sure my aversion to investment risk is that great. I will probably need to talk to the company to get another option for my personal pension.

UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT/ROYAL SKANDIA CARE ACCOUNT

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Skandia works out how large a lump sum they will have to pay for that level of care. This is paid into a "Care Account".

If and when a policyholder hits the level of disability, Royal Skandia pays 24 months' worth of benefit into a further account which pays for care. Bupa pro-

vides counselling on what to do with the payments. If care is needed for more than 24 months, an insurance policy pays out.

Plus points: Policyholders do not lose all their money if they never need long-term care. The combination of investment and insurance means some money

is returned, even if a claim is unnecessary. Further, policyholders do not have to exhaust the savings part of the plan in order to claim on the insurance.

Policyholders have the choice of a range of the most successful investment managers in the industry, maximising their

chances of savings growth. With many policyholders not knowing what to do at point of claim, Bupa's counselling is valuable.

Drawbacks and risks: Graham Bates, of Leeds-based independent financial adviser Bates and Partners, points out that investments have to grow at 9 per cent

a year in order to meet the level of cover required: there is no choice of risk. Because it is an offshore fund, there may be unwelcome tax implications if the policy is surrendered or on death. Charges are on the higher side. **Marks out five:** Two-and-a-bit.

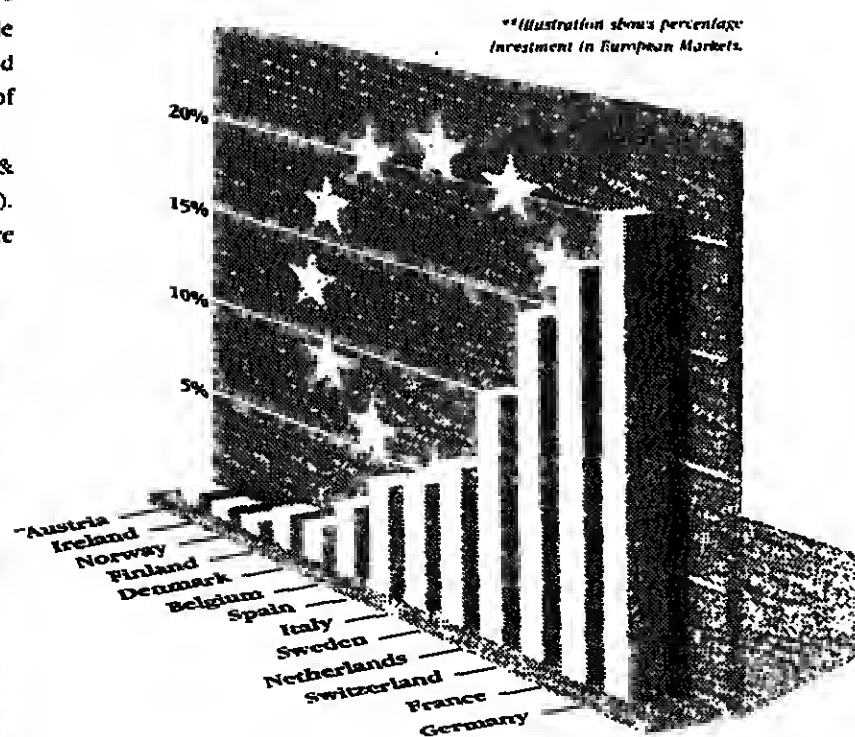
—Andrew Verity

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£25,000-£49,999	6.75%
£50,000-£99,999	6.90%
£100,000+	7.00%

All rates correct as 2nd October 1997.

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VARIABLE RATE	
APR	7.5%

All rates correct as 2nd October 1997.

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BEST BORROWING RATES

Telephone	% Rate and period	Max adv %	For incentive
MORTGAGES			
FIXED RATE			
Barclays Bank	5.55% 10 years	5.55%	
Barclays Bank	5.90% 10 years	5.90%	
Barclays Bank	6.25% 10 years	6.25%	
Barclays Bank	6.75% 10 years	6.75%	
Barclays Bank	6.90% 10 years	6.90%	
Barclays Bank	7.00% 10 years	7.00%	
VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES			
Barclays Bank	5.55% 10 years	5.55%	
Barclays Bank	5.90% 10 years	5.90%	
Barclays Bank	6.25% 10 years	6.25%	
Barclays Bank	6.75% 10 years	6.75%	
Barclays Bank	6.90% 10 years	6.90%	
Barclays Bank	7.00% 10 years	7.00%	
FIRST TIME BUYERS FIXED RATES			
Barclays Bank	5.55% 10 years	5.55%	
Barclays Bank	5.90% 10 years	5.90%	
Barclays Bank	6.25% 10 years	6.25%	
Barclays Bank	6.75% 10 years	6.75%	
Barclays Bank	6.90% 10 years	6.90%	
Barclays Bank	7.00% 10 years	7.00%	
FIRST TIME BUYERS VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES			
Barclays Bank	5.55% 10 years	5.55%	
Barclays Bank	5.90% 10 years	5.90%	
Barclays Bank	6.25% 10 years	6.25%	
Barclays Bank	6.75% 10 years	6.75%	
Barclays Bank	6.90% 10 years	6.90%	
Barclays Bank	7.00% 10 years	7.00%	

UNSECURED PERSONAL LOANS

Telephone	APR %	Max LTV	Fixed monthly payments (£500 over 3 yrs)
UNSECURED			
Barclays Bank	5.55%	90%	£10.00
Barclays Bank	5.90%	90%	£10.00
Barclays Bank	6.25%	90%	£10.00
Barclays Bank	6.75%	90%	£10.00
Barclays Bank	6.90%	90%	£10.00
Barclays Bank	7.00%	90%	£10.00
SECURED (SECOND CHARGE)			
Barclays Bank	5.55%	90%	£10.00
Barclays Bank	5.90%	90%	£10.00
Barclays Bank	6.25%	90%	£10.00
Barclays Bank	6.75%	90%	£10.00
Barclays Bank	6.90%	90%	£10.00
Barclays Bank	7.00%	90%	£10.00

OVERDRAFTS

Telephone	Account	% per APR	Unauthorised
OVERDRAFTS			
Barclays Bank	Current Account	5.55%	£100
Barclays Bank	Current Account	5.90%	£100
Barclays Bank	Current Account	6.25%	£100
Barclays Bank	Current Account	6.75%	£100
Barclays Bank	Current Account	6.90%	£100
Barclays Bank	Current Account	7.00%	£100

CREDIT CARDS

Telephone	Card Type	Min income	Rate % p.m.	APR %	Annual Fee	Int. free period
STANDARD						
Barclays Bank	Capital One	£10,000	5.55%	5.55%	£0	30 days
Barclays Bank	Capital One	£10,000	5.90%	5.90%	£0	30 days
Barclays Bank	Capital One	£10,000	6.25%	6.25%	£0	30 days
Barclays Bank	Capital One	£10,000	6.75%	6.75%	£0	30 days
Barclays Bank	Capital One	£10,000	6.90%	6.90%	£0	30 days
Barclays Bank	Capital One	£10,000	7.00%	7.00%	£0	30 days
GOLD CARDS						
Barclays Bank	Capital One	£10,000	5.55%	5.55%	£0	30 days
Barclays Bank	Capital One	£10,000	5.90%	5.90%	£0	30 days
Barclays Bank	Capital One	£10,000	6.25%	6.25%	£0	30 days
Barclays Bank	Capital One	£10,000	6.75%	6.75%	£0	30 days
Barclays Bank	Capital One	£10,000	6.90%	6.90%	£0	30 days
Barclays Bank	Capital One	£10,000	7.00%	7.00%	£0	30 days

STORE CARDS

Telephone	Payment by direct debit	Payment by other methods
STORE CARDS		
Barclays Bank	5.55%	5.55%
Barclays Bank	5.90%	5.90%
Barclays Bank	6.25%	6.25%
Barclays Bank	6.75%	6.75%
Barclays Bank	6.90%	6.90%
Barclays Bank	7.00%	7.00%

A - Minimum age 22 yrs. Holders of comprehensive motor insurance policy or lender's existing Customers
APR - Annualised percentage rate
ASU - Accident, sickness and unemployment insurance
B - £10 - Buildings and contents insurance
C - Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged
LTV - Loan to value
MIP - Mortgage indemnity premium
N - Introductory rate for a limited period
U - Unemployment insurance
All rates subject to change without notice. Source: MONEYFACTS 01692 500677 23rd Oct 1997

BEST SAVINGS RATES

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest
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INSTANT ACCESS

Barclays Bank	0800 445285	Savings	Instant	£1	6.25% p.a.
Lloyds Bank	0800 147785	Instant Cash	Instant	£2,500	4.50% p.a.

INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS

Barclays Bank	01422 533333	Instant Access	Instant	£10,000	6.25% p.a.
Lloyds Bank	01771 585 2323	Instant Access	Instant	£10,000	6.45% p.a.

FIXED RATE BONDS

Barclays Bank	01422 533333	Fixed Rate Bonds	Instant	£10,000	6.25% p.a.
Lloyds Bank	01771 585 2323	Fixed Rate Bonds	Instant	£10,000	6.45% p.a.

FIRST TESSAS

Barclays Bank	01422 533333	First TESSAS	Instant	£10,000	6.25% p.a.
Lloyds Bank	01771 585 2323	First TESSAS	Instant	£10,000	6.45% p.a.

OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS (gross)

Barclays Bank	01422 533333	Offshore Accounts	Instant	£10,000	6.25% p.a.
Lloyds Bank	01771 585 2323	Offshore Accounts	Instant	£10,000	6.45% p.a.

NATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (GROSS)

Barclays Bank	01422 533333	National Savings	Instant	£10,000	6.25% p.a.
Lloyds Bank	01771 585 2323	National Savings	Instant	£10,000	6.45% p.a.

CHILDREN'S SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (GROSS)

Barclays Bank	01422 533333	Children's Savings	Instant	£10,000	6.25% p.a.
Lloyds Bank	01771 585 2323	Children's Savings	Instant	£10,000	6.45% p.a.

INVESTMENT ACCOUNTS (GROSS)

Barclays Bank	01422 533333	Investment Accounts	Instant	£10,000	6.25% p.a.
Lloyds Bank	01771 585 2323	Investment Accounts	Instant	£10,000	6.45% p.a.

ALL RATES ARE SHOWN GROSS AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.

Source: MONEYFACTS 01692 500677 25 Oct 1997



BRIAN TORA

A roaring typhoon

There was an inevitability about the meltdown in Hong Kong that must have left many money managers wondering why they did not sell earlier. Quite a number of people believed that the China link would somehow insulate Hong Kong from the typhoon that was roaring around the region.

Unfortunately, this approach probably exacerbated the problem. Many managers have been overweight in Hong Kong, preferring to gain their exposure to the region from that market rather than through a broader basket of countries where the ravages of currency speculation have created difficult stock market trading conditions.

There were, to be fair, some reasons for believing that a degree of immunity to the region's problems existed. Hong Kong's foreign exchange reserves are massive. However, the devaluations that have taken place have undoubtedly taken their toll.

Then, of course, there is the psychological damage this is doing. If indeed the Hong Kong dollar is priced free of the mighty greenback, the Hong Kong is relegated to a seaside town in the mighty empire of China. Property values in Hong Kong were probably unsustainable anyway, so any further diminution of its status will not do them any good.

The immediate result in London was a shake-out in prices that once again demonstrated the fragility of the new trading system. Few com-

mentators believe that the fall in Hong Kong is a prelude to a new bear market, but London will inevitably pick up some of the ripples.

Interestingly, the shares of whisky distillers fell sharply on the news. I remember being told that Hong Kong was the largest market in the world for high quality French Cognac. My drinks analyst tells me this is because they re-export quite a percentage of it to China. It seems that sometimes Hong Kong can export more than it receives, but those Chinese always were very clever.

Wall Street had a mild attack of the jitters on the back of the news from the other side of the world, but overall we seem to be weathering it all quite well. Well, that is, apart from the new trading system. Standing on our trading floor on Thursday morning, the day that Hong Kong lost more than 10 per cent of its value, share prices fell 140 points on the back of a single trade. Now that is scary. If the London Stock Exchange really believes this is a stable market, they must have an interesting definition of stable.

So volatility is here to stay and the Eastern promise has vanished as fast as a chocolate bar in the Pacific sunshine. For the time being, taking a conservative approach to investment looks no bad thing. Cash could be king for a while.

Brian Tora is chairman of the investment strategy committee at Greig Middleton and can be contacted on 0171 655-4000

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Here is a proposition. We run an investment fund that only invests in high-risk start-up businesses. They have to be based on a new piece of technology which may or may not have a market. They will be run mostly by boffins with little or no commercial experience. You won't get any money back for at least five years and how much you make is anybody's guess. And one final thing. We only invest in businesses which are physically located within a 60-mile radius of our offices.

Sounds interesting? Or plain barmy? Well, now there is a chance to find out. The fund is called the Oxford Technology Venture Capital Trust, and it is - in theory at least - traded on the London Stock Exchange.

It is true that no shares have actually been traded yet, but the last quotation put a price on them of 115p. This represents a handsome premium over the asset value of 95p; and is all the more remarkable since the trust has yet to make its first investment. All the company has at the moment is a pile of cash, which it raised from investors in March.

Oxford Technology is one of about 20 new funds which go under the name of venture capital trusts. These are investment trusts which offer tempting tax breaks to those who invest in them (both income tax and capital gains tax relief on the amount invested, plus exemption from eventual capital gains on any profits, provided the shares are held for five years or more).

They started life as the latest in a long line of Government attempts to kick-start a genuine culture of venture capital in this country, using the fiscal system as an incentive. Venture capital, in British financial circles, is a portmanteau term that covers a multitude of financing forms.

A big chunk of the deals which go to make up the £1bn or so of transactions recorded by the British Venture Capital Association each year are not really venture capital at all. They are bankers financing management buyouts, or investors funding the expansion plans of already well-established businesses. According to Lucius Carey, author of the standard venture capital yearbook, less than 5 per cent of the deals billed each year are "genuine venture capital" deals, in the sense of providing seedcorn capital for high-risk businesses.

The hole is particularly acute in areas of high technology, where the investment community's traditional reluctance to back start-up businesses is compounded by its inability to judge whether or not the technology has any realistic chance of success. Partly for that reason, most seedcorn capital in this country that does find its way into start-up ventures of this kind comes from so-called "business angels" rather than traditional sources.

Mr Carey is one of the moving lights behind the establishment of the Oxford Technology trust, and something of a veteran of the venture capital

business. In 1972, at the age of 23, he started his own business, a restaurant in Bristol, using £26,000 of capital he had begged and borrowed from a number of different investors. The process was so painful that a few years later, having handed the running of his restaurants (now three in number) to managers, he decided to start a newsletter, *Venture Capital Reports*, to try and help plug the funding gap.

Since 1983, Mr Carey has also set up and managed five pools of genuine seedcorn capital for two much larger venture capital institutions, Apex Partners and 3i. He is the investment adviser to the Oxford Technology trust, which will be his biggest fund to date, with around £3m to invest.

The normal life of one of his seedcorn funds is 10 years. The first two are approaching the end of their lives, with all but one of their investments in both cases now having been realised (ie sold, passed on or simply abandoned). Despite the inevitable failure rate, the first fund will have returned around 25 per cent more than investors put in by the time it is closed. The other will have more than doubled the investors' original stake.

His greatest interest has always been in new ventures with a technological edge. Funding start-ups is an interesting but inevitably hit-and-miss business. Take the V-shaped photocopy, for example, a device which allows libraries to copy rare books without damaging their spines. This is one of the

ventures Mr Carey helped to fund with his seedcorn funds. It is a great technical success, but so far not enough libraries round the world have bought it to make the business profitable.

Will the Oxford Technology trust work out well for its investors? It has a strong board, including two Oxford academics, Sir Martin Wood and Michael O'Regan, who started what are now highly successful quoted companies (Oxford Instruments and RM Group) in their back bedrooms. It expects to make around 15 investments over four years or so.

The first four investments will be completed any day now. They include: "biocidal" powder coating which could cut the risk of e-coli and other health risks if applied to fridges and meat containers; an instrument which measures optical surfaces more accurately than any predecessor; and a device for retrieving stored information quickly and cheaply over the Internet.

Venture capital trusts have not been going long enough to prove themselves as investment vehicles: one obvious wrinkle with the concept is that, as the tax breaks require holders to invest for five years, there are no sellers to create a market in the shares until that stage. But if Mr Carey and his colleagues can demonstrate that investors can make money out of helping to kick-start entrepreneurial talent, nobody should begrudge them their success.

UNDERSTANDING THE STOCK MARKET

How do shares defy gravity?

Many new followers of the stock market are confused when share prices move in the opposite direction to their expectations. For example, a company announces a large increase in profits - its share price falls. A normally profitable organisation announces a loss - its share price soars. What a topsy-turvy world.

There is a logical explanation for both situations. Before revealing why the share prices appeared to defy gravity, let us take a look at the reason why share prices fluctuate.

A share in a company represents a minute portion of a business. Investors are part-owners of that company. If the business thrives, investors share in that success. They are rewarded with their share of some of its profits by receiving dividends. The rest is ploughed back into the business, hopefully to increase its profitability.

The price of a particular share is determined by supply and demand. In other words, the price will settle where buyers will purchase all the shares offered by sellers. If investors wish to buy more shares than are being

sold, prices will rise and vice versa. The price investors are prepared to pay reflects their views of future rewards.

The stock market is one of the barometers of the economy, so the general movement of share prices reflects views of economic prospects. If the future looks good, investors will be attracted to buy shares and prices will move upwards. The reverse will be the case if gloom is seen on the horizon. The economic outlook is not restricted to the UK's likely performance, but extends to other countries.

Professional investors are interested in what is going to happen rather than what has happened. Therefore the fundamental long-term economic and political factors are built into share prices in anticipation of the future. Of course, expectations and reality do not always coincide. For example, the 1990-91 recession was largely anticipated in share prices. However, when certain companies reported results much worse than expected, the market reacted with a fall.

Then there are the factors

which relate to the shares of specific companies. Some will have a favourable and others an adverse effect on prices. It may be a company's results, the launch of a new product expected to take the world by storm or the resignation of a chief executive.

There are two possible explanations for the announcement of bumper profits resulting in a fall in the share price. Investors may have been expecting even better figures. In anticipation the company's share price would have moved upwards in previous months. The disappointment of the published results would trigger the shares being marked down. On the other hand, the results could have been as anticipated, but the chairman could have signalled a fall in profits for the following year.

A fall in a company's profits, or even a loss, can result in the share price soaring. It may be that the loss is not as bad as investors anticipated, or the results are accompanied by a statement from the company that it will exceed all possible expectations the following year.

On the other hand, there



Woolwich: Takeover talk could be aiding the shares

could be speculation in the market that the company will be the victim of a takeover. Shares in Woolwich, for instance, may be doing well for this reason. A bid from another company undoubtedly triggers an increase in the demand for shares.

One of the more bizarre reasons for one company's shares falling sharply was when it cancelled some hotel rooms. The market believed this signalled a delay in a long-awaited new product. In fact the company was merely postponing a training seminar.

'Share Ownership for All', an easy-to-read guide for new shareholders, is available from the London Stock Exchange: 0171-797-1372.

LOOSE CHANGE

Alliance Trusts, the investment trust firm, is launching a self-invested personal pension for the self-employed and people in partnerships. The pension allows staggered retirement after age 50. Initial investment is set at £250 and there are no penalties for halting and starting contributions. Charges start at £1, plus 0.15 per cent stockbrokers' commission. Call 01382 201700.

Chase De Vere, the mortgage broker, is offering a fixed-rate home loan, pegged at 6.85 per cent until November 2000. The loan also offers an option to switch to the lenders' variable rates without penalty. The loan is available to 70 per cent of value and has an arrangement fee of £295. Call 0171 9307242.

Invest On-line, the direct investment arm of Royal & Sun Alliance, is offering a tracker PEP charging 0.3 per cent a year, with an initial fee of 2 per cent and no exit fees. The PEP is cheaper than its main rivals, Virgin and Legal & General, for regular contributions under £100 a month. Call 0500 100333.

John Charcol, the mortgage broker, has launched a site on the Internet with details of its best mortgages and investments, and a mortgage repayment calculator. The site is on: www.john-charcol.co.uk

Age Concern Financial Services is launching a 50-Plus life assurance plan, jointly with Commercial Union, guaranteeing cover to anyone aged 50 to 85. No medicals are needed. Premiums of £10 a month will buy cover worth £2,826 for a male aged 50 last birthday. Call 0181 7657239.

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6/STOCKBROKING

You don't have to be rich to approach these experts

"Stockbrokers only deal on behalf of the very rich," is a commonly held view. It is also wrong. Around 17 million people now own shares and many more know something about the stock market through the Government's privatisation programme. As Joanne Bridon explains, knowing a broker can come in handy

Stockbrokers are far removed from the stereotyped images often portrayed in the media. They are approachable and friendly. Moreover, they are also accessible: about 95 per cent of the population lives within 10 miles of a stockbroker's office.

But why invest in equities? If you take a medium-term view, direct investment in UK equities has consistently outperformed most other types of investment, particularly building society and other forms of deposit account.

But there is more to owning shares than the prospect of capital gains. They also generate income in the form of dividends, which should rise to reflect a company's continuing prosperity. Shares are risk investments. Prices can go down as well as up and the "crash of 1987" is often mentioned.

However, the surge and fall of 1986/7 – and even this week's bout of nerves in London and the Far East – do little to undermine the continuing long-term upward trend in the performance of ordinary shares.

The key to success is to receive high quality impartial advice from someone who is professionally qualified and whose knowledge of investment matters is not second-hand, operating in a strict regulatory framework.

Almost all of the firms who look after individual investors in shares are members of the Association of Private Client Investment Managers and Stockbrokers (APCIMS), the trade association that promotes those firms and, by extension, the interests of the private investors who use their services.

What makes APCIMS members different? Direct access to the stock market. The majority of our firms are members of the London Stock Exchange and are therefore unique in having direct and immediate access to it for buying and selling shares. Our other members have forged strong links with member firms of the Stock Exchange to ensure cost-effective dealing arrangements.

The computerised systems now available mean that brokers do not have to be located in the City of London: they can be in your local high street.

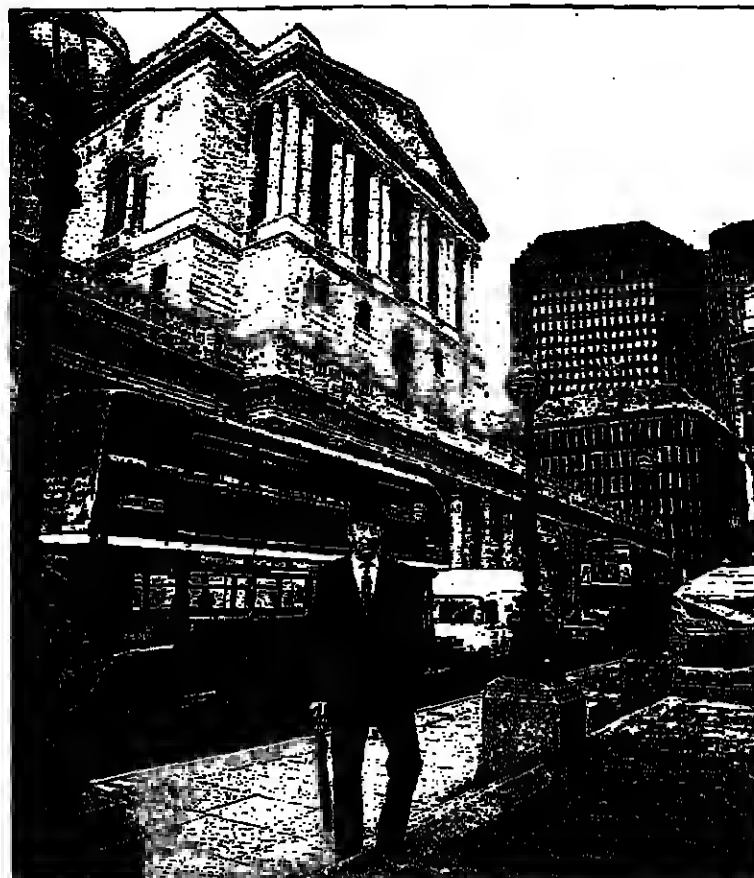
Stockbrokers are professionals – the

breadth and depth of investment experience and knowledge which APCIMS members make available to their clients contrasts with that of many other financial advisers. Their expertise is often limited to the selling of a handful of "packaged" products offered by the big insurance companies. APCIMS members are truly independent, unlike many other company salespeople, many of whom are "tied" to a particular company and are only allowed to sell that firm's products. The advice given is completely impartial. Furthermore, all charges are disclosed to you in advance.

All APCIMS members are regulated by either the Securities and Futures Authority or the Investment Managers' Regulatory Organisation, two of the City's toughest watchdogs. Stockbrokers are subject to demanding tests of their financial resources. They are obliged to meet the most rigorous procedural standards and management controls.

APCIMS members provide services tailored to suit your individual circumstances and requirements. The main services available are:

- Advisory services – almost all members offer an advisory service where the professional advises on the purchase, sale or retention of individual stocks.
- Dealing or "execution-only" service – this is designed for investors who do



The old image: The stereotyped idea of a stockbroker often portrayed in the media is wide of the mark

Photograph: Rex

not require advice but who do need a stockbroker to buy and sell shares.

• Discretionary investment management services – this gives the manager the authority to buy and sell for you without obtaining your prior approval on each and every occasion.

• Comprehensive financial planning – this can include advice on the placing of cash deposits, pensions, mortgages,

life insurance, PEPs, TESSAs and so on.

A comprehensive directory of APCIMS members, detailing the range of services they offer is available free by writing to APCIMS at 112 Middlesex Street, London E1 7TH, quoting reference IND.

Joanne Bridon, is treasurer and secretary of APCIMS.

For a no-frills share dealing service, fees start at £2.50

If you want a traditional stockbroking service, with its portfolio management and advisory services, then you need at least £25,000 to invest in the stock market. Tany Lyons investigates options for the rest of us

Following the privatisations and the conversion of building societies to banks over the last few years, a lot of us have become shareholders. We have discovered that if we want to buy or sell these shares we have to do so through stockbroker. The question is: do we want just to deal in shares at low cost or do we want advice about which stocks to trade and when?

Not many of us have vast sums available yet we would still like to buy and sell shares. The rise of execution-only stockbroking over the past 10 years has grown to meet this demand.

"We have become vitally important for those investors with small amounts of money available," says Gavin Oldham of the ShareCentre. "Traditional stockbrokers are not very welcoming. They work with just their own client list and won't accept new clients unless they have a lot of money to invest."

Walk down any high street and most of the main banks and building societies will offer you an execution-only trading facility for dealing in shares. In fact, they have over 60 per cent of the execution-only trading market. But they tend not to be as cheap as the specialist execution-only

brokers. ShareLink, the largest execution-only broker, about to change its name to Charles Schwab Europe, charges £10 to buy £1,000-worth of shares. CaterDeal, owned by Abbey National, will charge the same, while Sharemarket will charge just £9. Fees start at £2.50 at the ShareCentre for buying £250 worth of shares.

Charges with the banks and building societies vary but tend to be slightly higher. Use a traditional stockbroker, and the minimum you will be charged is at least £25.

Up until now, execution-only brokers offered no advice. ShareCentre is now introducing an advisory service to its customers. Costs are £15 a quarter and the use of a premium service phone line which costs £1.50p a minute.

"Execution only services are fine," says Nat

Jolowicz of Quilter Goodison. "Technical advances have made getting hold of information much easier. Newspapers are full of share tips and you can research companies through a computer screen."

"But comparing execution-only broking with our form of investment management is like food. You can read an Alistair Little cookbook, buy the ingredients and cook the meal at home. Or you can go to his restaurant and enjoy really good food in the right surroundings."

Stockbroking is polarising fast in this country between those who offer execution-only services and those who offer a more comprehensive investment management service. "We still believe that clients will pay a slightly higher cost for sound advice," says Mr Jolowicz.

Something in the City: a day in the life of a broker

I am responsible for overseeing three key areas of the business: dealing services, employee share dealing for quoted companies, and private clients. I also manage the portfolios for a number of my own clients.

During the course of this year, we expect to do over 900,000 retail trades on behalf of private clients. This means keeping ahead of events, which makes every day in the City of London a busy day.

I usually arrive in the office around 7.30am. By then, I have read the newspapers. My first tasks are to plan the day and review notes and papers for various meetings.

At 8.15 every morning, our head of research holds a short conference for brokers and fund managers. Here we review overnight events, particularly those in overseas stock markets, and look ahead to any company results or announcements expected that day. We decide at this meeting whether to change our stance on any recommended buys or sells.

After this meeting, I review my private client portfolios and make changes to the discretionary ones where appropriate. Advisory clients are contacted and any changes are agreed. By coffee time at 10.15, I get round to looking at my post, deal with client correspondence and any other general stockbroking matters.

After this it is time for meeting clients. These may include representatives from companies operating employee share option and share dealing services.

By 12.30 I am ready for lunch – always a working lunch with clients. Here we discuss any relevant matter. For example, a client may have sold his business so we need to look at how his in-

vestment portfolio needs to change now that he has a much larger capital sum to invest. By 2.30pm, I'm back at my desk.

Mid-afternoon will usually see me with our marketing department. I am particularly keen to encourage the millions of new investors from this year's building society and insurance company demutualisations to become more regular investors.

So we are looking at ways of promoting a newsletter, called "A Share in Great British Companies" that we will introduce later this year. Having done a pilot study, we want to reach a larger audience. We hope we can provide it with an insight into the wider benefits of the stock market.

Come 4 o'clock, and we review the day in the stock market. By the time this meeting finishes, my correspondence is ready for me to sign.

At 4.45, I have a regular meeting with our PEP office. We provide self-select and single company PEPs for investors who want to make their own decisions about holding equities. We provide the back office dealing services for all NatWest PEPs, so we have similar types of clients to the PEP managers of the banking and fund management arms of the bank. Like the rest of the industry, we are spending quite some time on considering what impact the introduction of Individual Savings Accounts will have on our future business.

After this meeting, I have a final chance to catch up on any phone calls and paperwork. Some days, I try to leave just after 6pm to try and play a game of indoor tennis, my way of trying to keep fit.

—Chris Ring, head of stockbroking, NatWest Stockbrokers.

How the face of Footsie has changed

When the FTSE 100 share index, the barometer of the UK stock market, was first calculated on 3 January 1984 it had a value of 1,000. By the end of the first day it closed at 997.5. What lessons can we draw to assess future trends? Steve Kelly, of Datastream/ICV, the financial statistics provider, charts some answers



In the red: Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, at the Stock Exchange on Monday, when shares dived

The story of Footsie can be seen very much as one of growth. Yet within that growth have been spectacular market reversals and individual failures, as well as successes.

By 16 October 1987, the index had increased to 2,301. One thousand pounds invested in the market that first January morning would have swelled to a comfortable £3,180, assuming all dividends had been reinvested.

What came next, of course, was Black Monday – 19 October 1987. The market crash on that day and declines in the rest of 1987 meant that the original £1,000 was worth £2,500 by the end of that year.

Fast-forward to today. That original investment of £1,000 is now worth over £10,000; the Footsie still hovers close to 5,000, despite this week's reversals. In the last year alone the UK stock market has gained almost 25 per cent.

But that brief review hides some fascinating nuggets on individual companies. Of the original 100 constituents only 46 still remain in the index, and some of these, like Glaxo, now Glaxo Wellcome, Midland Bank, now part of HSBC and Beecham, now SmithKline Beecham, have seen substantial change.

Many other organisations have experienced even more changes. Among those original members who have now left the index were Blue Arrow, British & Commonwealth, Exco International, Ferranti, Hawker Siddeley, Magnet & Southern, MFI and Trusthouse Forte.

Other notable ins and outs include Pol-

ly Peck, Saatchi & Saatchi, Next and Ladbroke.

You can almost see in the changing pattern of the FTSE 100 a reflection of the changes in the UK economy. The waves of privatisation had not yet really begun in 1984. Now 14 constituents are present which were previously public utilities or nationalised industries. Another factor has been the significant increase in the weight of financial institutions. Partly fuelled by the demutualisation of building societies, there are now 15 financials in the index.

In the last year, the performance of some of these financial stocks, together with growth of major players in the pharmaceutical and oil sectors, has largely underpinned the Footsie's growth. The rest of the UK market, particularly many of the smaller capitalised stocks, has produced far more modest gains.

And where, for the future? History tells us that the UK market is closely linked to Wall Street (perhaps, after this week at least, the Far East too). The events of October 1987 in the London market were part of a North American-led phenomenon.

It is only to be expected that the UK market would fall if the New York Dow Jones Industrial Index were to decline sharply. Indeed the trends towards globalisation and the onset of round-the-clock trading only serve to increase associations across many major markets world-wide.

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TOP THREE PERFORMERS OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS

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How insurers get out of paying out

Insurance helps you sleep at night. Believing you're covered financially against all manner of disaster can really give you peace of mind. But what if this sense of security proves to be no more than an illusion? Rachel Fissen checks out your rights

Many people wake with a start when they come to claim on an insurance policy and find themselves turned down. Keen competition has cut margins in the underwriting business to the bone. Some in the industry claim this pressure is forcing insurers to avoid payouts wherever legally possible.

"Insurers' prices are pretty much at rock bottom at the moment," says Sharon Bolton, from the British Insurance and Investment Brokers Association (BIIBA). "To put it bluntly, there's not much money to be made in underwriting, so they have to be very careful about what they pay out."

One loophole insurers can often exploit is known as "non-disclosure" or "misrepresentation". If you fail to disclose information which is considered to be material when you apply for insurance cover, then the company can refuse to meet any claim you make on that policy.

In one example, a family had all their copper plumbing stolen during a break-in. When they came to submit their claim to the insurance company with whom they held a household contents policy, they were given the thumbs down. The insurer said they had failed to disclose the fact that they lived close to a Romany site. In this case the insurer eventually paid up. It was proved that staff from the insurance company itself often drove past the site and must have been aware of its existence.

Increasingly insurers are



saying that they weren't given material information at the time the policy was written out, Ms Bolton says. "We think it's very unfair because the general public can't be expected to know what is material information."

But the office of the Insurance Ombudsman - the industry's watchdog - says policyholders often fall foul of the ooo-disclosure rules through their own fault. If you deliberately misrepresent the facts in an insurance application, then you can be wasting your money paying premiums.

"It is very important you think carefully about the answers you are giving, and if there's any doubt you should point this out," says Michael Lovegrove, of the Ombudsman's office.

A lot of complaints filed by the Ombudsman relate to alleged ooo-disclosure. Sometimes the fact that information

was missing turns out to be completely innocent - where a question was simply not asked, Mr Lovegrove says.

But not always. "Frothing" is a sure way to render your car insurance void. This is typically where a man of 17 or 18 has his car insured under his father's name, to keep the premiums low, but is named as a driver on the policy. If a claim is investigated, insurance company staff can often detect fronting, by finding out if the father has a car himself, for example, or if the son drives the car to work.

The most common reason for any insurance claim being refused is that the policyholder believed something was covered which in fact was not. Anyone who sells you a policy should tell you whether there are any particular exclusions that apply to you, says Suzanne Moore of the Association of British Insurers. For instance,

a mortgage protection policy might be intended for employed people. If a self-employed person was mistakenly sold that policy, a claim would probably be refused.

"It's always a good idea to at least skim through the policy documents when you have them, and find out what you might need when making a claim," Ms Moore says.

If your insurance policy is going to give you real peace of mind, you must make sure you are truthful when taking it out. "If there is anything at all you think may be relevant, then mention it, even if you are not directly questioned," says Harry Purchase, a consultant on insurance claims.

Bankruptcy, County Court judgments and fines must be disclosed. And mention any defects in your property or anything out of the ordinary, such as a nearby stream that might flood, Mr Purchase advises.

When making any claim, let the insurer know as soon as possible that you intend to claim. If there's a question on the form you can't immediately answer, explain this in writing. If there is a question which doesn't apply, don't leave it blank - write this down too.

If you do end up disagreeing with the decision made by your insurance company, first contact the person dealing with your claim. You should always be given a reason for a claim being refused.

If you think you have been treated unfairly, contact the Insurance Ombudsman's office. However, some insurers are not members of the Ombudsman scheme. Grips may then have to be settled through the courts.

Insurance Ombudsman, 0171 928 7600; Association of British Insurers, 0171 600 3333; BIIBA, 0171 623 9043.

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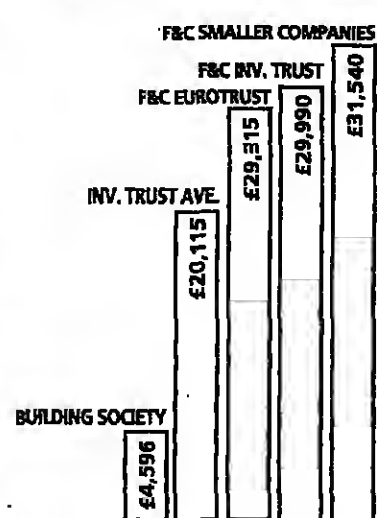
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Precaution or paranoia? Safety first in new homes

Electronically-operated gatehouses, alarms, guards, dogs, CCTV cameras, sensors, extra locks, swipe cards, alarm beepers – no, we are not talking maximum security prisons but a new style of accommodation aimed at delivering a safe environment for people to live in. Penny Jackson escapes to give her report

In St George's Hill, the Surrey stronghold of the rich and famous, there is now 24-hour monitoring by guards. At Barratt's new Virginia Water development, the only access is through a permanently manned gatehouse. Swipe cards, keypads and cameras are not enough for some whose possessions come close to the value of their house. People at least can't go on the blink.

If this seems American in flavour, it is. "They particularly like St George's Hill and if an American family is paying £7,000 a month rent, they have every right to insist on the highest security", says Victoria Lamb, of Oak Residential Lettings in Weybridge.

"They want to know that every coming and going is checked. But some English owners don't like the atmosphere and have moved out."

While clearly the influence of wealthy foreign buyers has ratcheted up the security provisions in both new and old homes, the insurance industry has been very much a driving force in all sectors of the market as they offer competitive discounts if certain measures are taken.

The guard at Barratt's electrocuted gates may have won over a Middle East buyer, but even at modest developments people expect a few of the same security features.

It is not surprising, given that one in 34 homes were burgled in the UK last year. Even though some comfort



Porterhouse blues: when swipe cards and cameras are not enough, a manned gatehouse is the answer, as at Barratt's Virginia Water development

Photo: John Lawrence

can be drawn from latest police figures which show a 10 per cent drop in burglaries in the UK, women and older people in particular regard security as a key issue.

According to a table compiled by Eagle Star, the insurers, the city with the highest risk of burglary is Middlesbrough, where one in 13 homes are likely to be broken into, while Ip-

swich comes out as the most law-abiding with fewer than one in 80 homes burgled.

Meanwhile, Loodoo is much safer than is generally thought, with a below-average break-in rate of one in 40. Burglaries in the capital have fallen by 12 per cent this year.

Nevertheless, the closer people are to London the more anxious they

are about security. John August, of Galliard Homes, says that some people are just plain paranoid.

"Although there may be two CCTV systems, monitored centrally and by residents, we have been asked for at least three locks on doors, extra cameras and the swipe card code to be changed every week."

At County Hall, Galliard has

also installed a system by Telguard which decodes an apartment number into a telephone number. "You can be miles away and use your mobile to let someone into the building," explains Mr August.

At Berkeley Homes, Paul Vallone sees it as the responsibility of the developer to fit the most suitable system.

Capital Wharf at Wapping was de-

signed with as few entrances as possible, and with cameras in all communal areas. The underground car-park's steel door can only be opened by a remote control fob, which also activates the door to the development.

Much publicised muggings earlier this year in west London showed how vulnerable people are when

parking and many will only buy where there is an integral garage.

In older properties, security systems are constantly being upgraded – often after the owner has come home to find the door kicked in and the house ransacked. The police, though, have become much tougher with owners of faulty alarms.

In one area of south London, 97 per cent of call-outs were false alarms. A locksmith on the same patch finds he is fitting more security gates and grilles.

Security for the seller is a particular headache for David Forbes of Chesterfield, whose average sale is about £1.5m. "Our worry is that someone might pose as a buyer in order to case the joint. If we can't get a handle on them, we won't show them around. Some sellers won't even have a brochure for that reason. It gets pretty complicated when the wealthy or famous are operating under a pseudonym". He has seen more panic buttons going into houses and sensors into gardens.

In the country, unless the buyer is from the Middle East and sees an ambush down every lane, owners are generally more relaxed.

Sensitive and expensive systems are as much for insurance purposes as protection, finds Rupert Sweeting of Knight Frank. "There was one house surrounded by three close-knit wire fences, with prison razor wire on top. The owner said he wanted to go in and out of the house without locking his door." He adds: "I don't think you can beat fierce dogs; they are still the best form of security."

But not for the Wimblewood couple whose dog was so distraught about being left alone to guard the house that it activated the latch on the front door. When they returned late at night they had to break in through a window, which set off the alarm. "Locked out by dog" at least has a ovel ring on police files.

Security advice from Crime Prevention Officers National Approval Council for Security Systems (Nacoss); for list of recognised firms, tel: (01628 37512).

Home to the new parliament, but a maze to the unwary

As Scotland prepares for devolution and Edinburgh readies itself to house the new Scottish Parliament, prices in the city are on the rise. But as *Hornish Scott* reports, it pays to know the system and the city.

Edinburgh solicitors do not like to speak of "booms". The legal firms that handle most property transactions north of the border tend to use a more restrained vocabulary than southern estate agents and there has, in any case, never been great call for expressions of excitement about the price of Scottish property.

The dramatic price swings so familiar to homeowners in the South have scarcely caused a ripple in Edinburgh or Aberdeen. Even in the past 12 months, as average prices in the South-east have soared by 10.7 per cent, property in Scotland has shown no rise whatsoever, according to the Halifax House Price Index.

As Edinburgh prepares for devolution there are, however, signs that stronger language may be called

for. "It's becoming very difficult to put a value on prime properties," says Simon Fairclough of the Edinburgh Solicitors Property Centre.

"You can estimate a flat at £80,000, then see it sell for £150,000." Such extreme examples may be rare, but the ESPC's own figures indicate that prices in the city's prime residential districts have increased by an average of around 16 per cent over the past year.

Buying property in Scotland can be a bewildering experience for English people unfamiliar with the "sealed bid" system. When Stephanie Harvey moved from Wiltshire up to Edinburgh earlier this year, she soon found her ideal home; a three-bedroom flat in the New Town with huge high-ceilinged rooms and exquisite Georgian plasterwork that was advertised for offers over £123,000.

A survey valuation based on recent prices in the area suggested that the flat was worth £145,000, but when a closing date for bids was fixed, Stephanie's solicitor informed her that three other bidders would also be competing. On the fateful day she

bid £151,000 and learnt within four hours that the flat was hers.

"It was like shooting in the dark," says Stephanie. "I'll never know if I got it by £100 or paid thousands more than necessary."

Solicitor John Clute emphasises that such competition applies only to properties in prime locations. "The rises we have seen are incredibly selective," he says. "I'd say that some prices have gone up by 20 per cent in the past year, but it's vital to choose not just the right area, or even the right street, but the right building."

With a population of half a million confined between the Pentlands and the Firth of Forth, Edinburgh is a compact multi-layered city where elegance rubs shoulders with decay. The most magnificent New Town apartment may be sandwiched in between a flat let out to students and a massage parlour, with a "commo stair" last decorated in the days of Robert Louis Stevenson.

In 1991 Ian Dunn bought such a flat in Gayfield Square for £71,000. The 1800s block suffered from dry rot and a badly leaking roof.



Prime property: prices are up in the best areas of Edinburgh, but not everywhere

Burness Property

"The basic work was going to cost each owner £25,000," says Ian. "So I helped to organise a more ambitious scheme for full renovation that would be eligible for a grant. In the end we each paid £11,000, though I spent another £35,000 on the flat itself." With work just finishing, the block is now immaculate and Ian has sold his flat for £150,000.

Uncertainty over the parliament's

location has discouraged speculation in specific areas.

Around Calton Hill, the site that most of Edinburgh would vote for, elegant town houses of ministerial proportions can fetch up to £500,000, though in nearby Montgomery Street a two-bedroom flat may still be found for under £60,000.

In Leith the disparity is still more extreme. While the waterfront of Ed-

inburgh's old port has been transformed by trendy restaurants and conversions, many backstreet tenements still reflect, at least in their appearance, the town's tough and seedy past.

Flats here may be had for under £10,000 and have, to date, shown little sign of any rise in value. Leith is, however, on the up, with the Scottish Office well-established on Vic-

toria Quay and plans for a new Ocean Terminal.

According to enthusiasts, this renaissance represents the future of the Scottish nation in contrast to the bourgeois heritage of central Edinburgh.

Post-Braveheart nationalists may therefore be queuing up to buy the "shell apartments" currently on offer in a former whisky warehouse in Marline Street at prices of between £45,000 and £145,000. According to the developers, the Leith Loft Company, the apartments offer an opportunity for "adventurous creative spirits to tailor their own space".

So whilst Edinburgh's solicitors will readily admit that current prices indicate a more than usually "sustained and steady growth", they flinch at any mention of a boom. A boom in Edinburgh might mean that the solicitor himself could no longer live in a stately Georgian apartment with views across the rooftops to the hills of Fife, a restaurant at ground level and a handy plumber, or indeed a massage parlour, in the basement. With such a lifestyle to preserve, booms are strictly for the English.

THREE TO VIEW: WITH A * LISTING



The Manor House at Blandford St Mary in Dorset is Grade II* listed and is recorded as early as 1618. The five-bedroom, five reception room house with separate flat has plasterwork and panelling in some of the rooms. There is a partly walled kitchen garden and orchard stocked with apple and cherry trees. Also included in the price is a detached former coach house converted into a two-bedroom cottage. With almost 35 acres, it's for sale through Knight Frank for £675,000 (01935 812236).



Middlethorpe House in the village of Curry Rivel, near Langport in Somerset, is a Grade II* listed former manor house, with hamstone mullion windows, leaded lights and flagstone floors. Built in the 17th century, with 19th-century additions, the five-bedroom house has a 20ft reception hall and panelled staircase. There's also a library, panelled dining room, old-fashioned larder and a laundry room. In a third of an acre of gardens, it's for sale at £225,000 through Greenslade Taylor Hunt (01458 250589).



Eastcote Manor near Barstone, 10 miles from Birmingham, is an Elizabethan Grade II* listed six-bedroom house, which has been restored and refurbished. It has a heated outdoor pool and a two-storey coach house. There are four reception rooms and a 22ft kitchen with a two-oven Aga. The dining room overlooks the knot garden, part of the 6.6 acres of grounds. On sale for £635,000 through John Shepherd (01564 783866).

There's no ceiling on a child's imagination

Twenty years ago, mustard and brown dominated children's rooms. Today, the sky's the limit, especially as 'Star Wars' makes a comeback after years of being seen as a naff leftover from the late Seventies. Fiona Brandhorst peeks into the kids' den



Cast your mind back, it's 1970. Luke Skywalker's intergalactic battles were still to be fought but man had already landed on the moon. Your bedroom had yet to become an adult-free zone and you were happy with your orange candlewick bedspread, tissue paper roses and Athena poster of a fluffy kiteo sitting in a teacup.

Then someone, somewhere, decided that children needed a space to call their very own. Your dad had to build you a bunk bed complete with integral strip lighting, shelves and pin board. Star Wars wallpaper was within your grasp and you didn't care if the repeat pattern of Basil Brush blurred your vision for a week.

Strangely, few children of the Seventies can remember their bedroom. André Moutout, 37,

is a rare exception. Helped by the fact that he recently found a snapshot of himself proudly posing in front of his Nasa programme wallpaper, he remembers his space-mad days with understandable nostalgia. "I was always rigging up some air-propelled Squeazy-bottle space rocket on a string that I'd seen on the TV programme *How*, so I think my parents let me have my own way with the wallpaper."

Now his six-year-old son goes to sleep deep in the rain-forest with endangered species on the prowl around his walls. "William's much more into saving the planet than I was at that age. I was into blowing it up."

But that doesn't mean today's children have lost their sense of adventure. Second generation Star Wars fans now

have their own chance to strike back. To mark the trilogy's release, a redesigned Star Wars wallcovering has been launched; it was first available in full Technicolor in 1977.

Demand is expected to be huge but there's already a lot out there to choose from. With a pliable parent, today's child has access to pattern books full of superheroes or television characters.

Each time Disney releases a new film a fully co-ordinated wallcovering collection follows: *Aladdin*, *Pocahontas* and now *Hercules* will be appearing soon on a bedroom wall near you.

It's not a question of whether you want to decorate, it's how often. For parents it poses a dilemma. Should you indulge your child in his or her latest fad? Mick Atkinson, father

of Bruno, 5, doesn't think you need to: "I don't like the so-called traditional stuff. We've got wall hangings from India and South America in Bruno's room and I think the primitive nature of the art does fit quite well in a child's bedroom. It's simple, evocative and very colourful. I suppose it's adults' taste but Bruno picked all the dinosaur posters to go with it."

So what would children today choose for their bedrooms if there were no restrictions? Richard Greenhill, 8, likes the wild animal border he's recently chosen for his room. But he would make changes given a free rein. "I'd love Star Wars wallpaper," he says. "And I've had my Mickey Mouse curtains for ages, so I'd rather have Indiana Jones ones. Can you get them?" Surprisingly, not yet.

His sister Alice, 10, likes a different kind of fantasy story. "I chose a border with unicorns, rabbits, fairies and a castle - it was pretty and I like those kinds of things," says Alice. A keen ballet dancer since she was three, Alice would have liked all her bedroom walls covered with ballerinas - if her mother had agreed.

So it seems that gender stereotyping is even more evident now than 25 years ago when mustard-yellow and brown had universal sex appeal. Broadly speaking, the 1990s girl appears to prefer pastel colours and Barbie pinks, not to mention Barbie herself and any amount of ballet dancers and floral folksy styles. Boys choose to speed their days and nights being pirates, train drivers and skippers - only

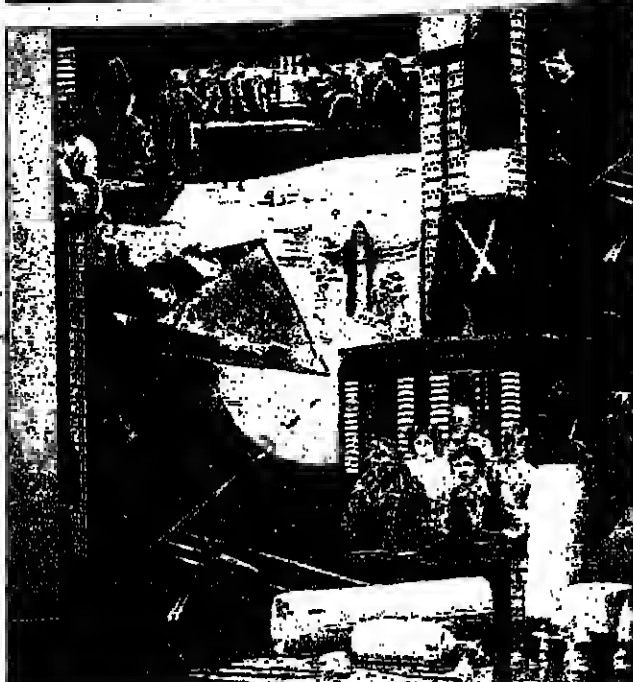
Sweet dreams: From Star Wars in the Seventies (bottom right, by Vymura) through Beano in the Eighties (right, Vymura) back to a Star Wars revival now; but the alternative in the Nineties is saving endangered species (left, Crown's Go Wild collection)

circus life seems to cross the boy/girl divide. Tanetta has been hand-painting children's bedrooms and furniture for around seven years and says it is the creative parents who want something different for their children. "It's the mums who have something in mind and motivate the child into liking it too."

Most of the work she does for boys' bedrooms is brightly coloured fish and animals. Younger girls prefer fairies, raggy dolls and flowers. "I work all over the South-east and contrary to popular belief the wackiest people definitely live in Essex," says Tanetta. "They want everything bigger and bolder than anywhere else and they're not afraid to go over the top. The colours are all raspberry, lime green and tangerine with lots of sparkly paint for the girls."

However, you can never predict what a child will choose. Tanetta's daughter has just plumped for a bold ready-printed wallpaper in preference to one of her mum's hand-painted designs. Who knows, the orange candlewick bedspread may yet make a return.

Vymura (0161-368 8321); Tanetta Nye (0171-642 3757)



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MORTGAGES

When it's best to move lenders

The offer sounded good at the time. A fixed-rate mortgage, pegged at an attractively low level. Except, it is now coming to an end. What do you do? Should you fix again? Will you be allowed to? Nic Cicutti looks at the options.

Cast your mind back just two or three years ago. For hundreds of thousands of borrowers, that period was a golden age, when it was possible to fix a home loan for three, four and five years at rates as low as 4.99 per cent for shorter-end mortgages.

Of course, the low rates had more than a little to do with the fact that, with first-time buyers scarce on the ground, lenders were desperate to poach each other's business.

But in the intervening period, for many the gamble has paid off. With variable rate mortgages back up to 8.45 per cent and, so the experts say, destined to go even higher, that fix in 1994 has meant considerable savings since then.

The really testing question is that of what to do now. The generation of borrowers coming out of their present fixes face the possibility of variable rates that may be up to double the payments they have been making up until recently.

For them, the need is often for a new – and competitive – fixed rate to stabilise payments at levels they know will apply for some years to come, or the option of moving elsewhere if need be. If so, they face difficulties.

Simon Tyler, a director at Chase de Vere Mortgages, a mortgage broking firm in London, says: "Thousands of people who locked into very attractive rates are starting to come out of them now."

"The problem they have is one of how to get a good deal from their lender. Not is it likely that their lender will offer



Path to a puzzle: many people move in on a fixed-rate loan, only to be faced by difficulties when the fixed-rate period expires

them as attractive rates as they would to new borrowers."

Nor is it that easy to switch lenders. According to Nick Deutsch, chief executive at FirstMortgage, a telephone-based home loans provider, the difficulty lies in what borrowers signed up to at the time of that bargain deal.

"There has always been some form of penalty for repaying a mortgage early but up to three years or so ago there was very little 'overhang' if any," Mr Deutsch says. "When you took out a fixed rate mortgage, the chances were that any redemption penalty did not extend that far beyond the length of the fixed or discounted period."

"This meant that once it was over, you could move to another lender within a relatively short time. Today, it is more difficult to do so."

"Some lenders are less keen on offering a new and competitive fix to people coming out of one because they have calcu-

lated their costs on the basis that borrowers will stay with them for six or seven years."

Another reason for many lenders' reticence to offer attractive new deals to existing borrowers, particularly among building societies, is that they face restrictions on how they raise money to lend. Because it comes largely out of savers' deposits, they will tend to offer new borrowers the best deals.

Not everyone is in the same boat. Many other bank-style lenders are relatively unencumbered with the need to use wholesale funding from the money markets to finance new rounds of lending.

Jim Chadwick, marketing director at Barclays Mortgages, says: "When customers take out a fixed-rate mortgage with us, we make it clear that we may be able to offer them a new rate at the end of their fixed term."

"This gives them the confidence and peace of mind of being able to budget ahead. Indeed, many of our customers

use this to their advantage, by taking up a number of successive fixed rates with us."

Matthew and Marie Dennis, a young couple living in Bedford, did just that. Their first £50,000 repayment-style loan, taken out through Barclays Mortgages in March 1995, was pegged at 5.99 per cent for one year. Thereafter, the couple moved straight on to a 18-month deal, fixed at 7.25 per cent.

Recently, when the time came to consider the options once again, they went for another fix, this time for 10 years at 7.99 per cent.

Mr Dennis, a financial adviser working for an insurance company, explains: "We wanted the security of knowing what our payments would be for a while ahead and I thought that this would be the best move. Although interest rates may well come down next year, they are quite likely to go up in the intervening period, which makes this an even better deal."

His wife Marie adds: "We didn't want to gamble, but it is worth noting that this rate is below the existing variable rate anyway. And with this loan, we did not have to pay an extra arrangement fee or for a new valuation."

Not everyone will be lucky enough to be offered a similar deal by their lender, although increasingly, those lenders who find their customers are prepared to redeem a mortgage rather than stay put on uncompetitive rates are willing to quietly give the same terms as they would to new borrowers.

At Chase de Vere, Simon Tyler recommends this as one option. Alternatively, he advises that it can sometimes be necessary to move away from a lender even if this may involve a penalty for doing so.

Nick Deutsch, from FirstMortgage, agrees. His company has just launched two three-year products. One is a discounted mortgage, which knocks 2.05 per cent off a cur-

rent variable rate of 8 per cent. The other is a fixed rate pegged at 6.15 on loans of up to 90 per cent of a home's value.

Mr Deutsch advises doing your sums before you move: "Say you are on a variable rate of 8.25 per cent and you get the chance of a two-year fixed deal at 4.99 per cent. The saving will be 6.5 per cent over those two years."

"Now, say there is a redemption penalty of six months' interest on your loan. That works out at 4.125 per cent. Even after legal and arrangement fees, plus a new valuation, you will still be significantly in the black. Sometimes the mathematics do speak in favour of moving your loan."

The Independent has published a free 27-page Guide to Mortgages, written by Nic Cicutti, the paper's personal finance editor. The guide, sponsored by Barclays Mortgages, is available to all readers by calling 0800 585691. Or fill in the coupon on page 4.



PENNY JACKSON

Gazumping is no problem – unless it happens to you

Gazumping is not nearly as much of a problem as everyone thinks, according to Black Horse Agencies. It has monitored the subject for its latest Home Report, out yesterday, and says that it is surprised to find gazumping occurs in only 5 per cent of all sales in England.

No one who is a victim of gazumping will feel any better for knowing that, but the real culprits of the piece seem to be buyers who pull out. Apparently an average 12 per cent go back on their word and are the cause of almost three-quarters of collapsed sales.

Whether it is buyers or sellers (5 per cent) who pull out, the effect is to almost double the time it takes to agree a sale. The report shows that homes are selling in 12 weeks or less on average – the fastest time since the surveys started.

One in seven homes are even selling in a week or less and half in six weeks or less. The hot-spots, with a time of two weeks, are St Albans, Alton in Hampshire, Chelsea and Wells in Somerset.

Scotland makes a debut appearance with an average of 11 weeks. The slowest region is the North-west where it takes an average 19 weeks. Nationally, 96 per cent of the asking price is achieved and the Black Horse average property sells for £79,000. First time buyers make up 31 per cent and the lowest average price they pay is £40,000 in Scotland and the highest £72,000 in the South-east. The num-

ber of available homes is more than 30 per cent down on last year and Black Horse concludes that the market has "paused for breath".

* Ironsides, a residential letting agency, is warning that high London rents are driving would-be tenants away from their traditional haunts in Knightsbridge, Kensington and Chelsea. It says that sub-standard properties are often marketed at prime prices. Jacqueline Ironsides says over-optimistic rents

'Over-optimistic rents in London are in danger of "killing the goose" – Far East nationals'

are in danger of "killing the goose", namely nationals from the Far East.

So far buyers from the region show no signs of losing interest in the London market but Ms Ironsides believes that many are, in fact, experiencing difficulties. She likens the belief in sustainable increases in rents to the madness of the Eighties sales boom. "This time, if we wait until the music stops, it is the rental market that will be hit."

She adds: "It is the best kind of corporate tenant who most objects to inflated prices. These are the tenants who pay the rent on time, take up options to renew and respect property."

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